

MANUSCRIPT 102

Richard, of St. Victor, d. 1173.

Tractatus Richardi de contemplatione eiusque meditatione [published, in the Venice ed. of 1506, under the title De archa mystica de contemplatione et eius commendatione].

Bound with Richard's De exterminatione mali et promotione boni; and with the anonymous Compendium theologicae veritatis.

B765.R5D2. 14-- MS 102

Germany and France (in Latin).

Early 15th century

The MS is a composite 15th-century codex containing unrelated copies of three popular 12th-century works. The three items bound arbitrarily in the codex are in different hands and had different origins. The two treatises by Richard of St. Victor seem to have originated in Germany (?); the third work, the Compendium theologicae veritatis, seems to have been compiled in France. All were written on vellum leaves in black ink and rubricated. The third work is in a fine, small, upright, Gothic hand, with many initials delicately decorated in blue and red. In appearance it is the finest of the three, and is the only one with double columns on each page.

The royal abbey and school of St. Victor, with canons regular following the Augustinian rule, began near Paris in 1108 as a spiritual retreat and place of instruction for William of Champeaux and his students, among whom was the celebrated Pierre Abelard (1079-1142). The abbey, in its early days, was closely associated with the University of Paris; was the beneficiary of ample royal endowments; and became the center of a numerous group of canonries belonging to the Order of St. Victor. One of the early abbots, Hugo of St. Victor (1096-1141), a distinguished and influential teacher and theologian, wrote on many branches of theology, philosophy, and mysticism. His pupil, Richard of St. Victor, was born probably in Scotland, but

spent most of his adult life in contemplative seclusion at St. Victor, where he rose to the position of prior. Richard developed and refined Hugo's work on the contemplative life, and wrote fairly extensively on mystical, dogmatic, and exegetical subjects. Prior Richard's treatises had an immense vogue in their day and were widely copied and recopied for the use of other monasteries. His attempt, in Benjamin major and Benjamin minor, to formulate a practical technique by which mystical ecstasy could be arrived at, through following a planned series of spiritual and mental exercises, was very influential. Dante had high words of praise for Prior Richard.

The first collection (incomplete) of Richard's works was published in Venice in 1506: Opera venerabilis et erimii doctoris Ricardi de Sancto Victore (Venice: Benedicti Fontane Veneti per Jacobus Pentium Leucensem, 23 March 1506). The MS text of the De contemplatione does not appear to differ greatly from the printed text De arch mystica, the last work in the Opera (sigs. Z-1 to HH-4), except that the number of contractions is far greater in the codex than in the published version. All of this is also true of the MS version of the dogmatic work De exterminatione mali, which is the second item in the Opera (sigs. D-4 to G-4.)

The Compendium theologiae veritatis was a popular textbook of theology that was used for many centuries, and of which <sup>almost all are</sup> many MS copies in existence. It has been attributed to Hugo of Strassburg, or to Albertus Magnus, or to a number of other medieval theologians. The MS text does not appear to differ very greatly from the first printed text: Compendium theologicae veritatis (Venice, 1476), a very early printed book.

1 vol., vellum, 17 x 12 cm.  
 3 items: 86 leaves (with f. 45 missing), 60 leaves, and  
 112 leaves--or 258 leaves in all (with one missing).  
 Old pigskin binding over wooden boards, wormeaten. A portion  
 of one metal clasp remaining. Five large holes in  
 the back cover, which once held metal bosses. Re-  
 inforcing strips of brass nailed to the corners and  
 edges of the covers.

Fair copies of 3 MSS in 3 hands. The first 2 items  
 fully foliated; the 3rd item has been neither foliated nor  
 paginated. One of the worm-eaten frontpapers has an owner's  
 name written on it, in ink, "Parker 1879." Each item is  
 preceded by a list of the chapters contained in it. No  
 index.

Sold Sotheby to Thorpe, 1930 and purchased from Thorpe,  
 cat. 411, item #662, in 1930. Ricci, I, 565.

#### Bibliographical note.

There are at least seven collected editions of Richard of St.  
 Victor's works printed during the 16th and 17th centuries: Venice  
 1506; Paris, 1518; Lyons, 1534; Paris, 1550; Venice, 1592; Cologne,  
 1621; and Rouen, 1650. An English trans. of his works was made by  
 Clare Kirchberger and published in London, 1957. For further bio-  
 graphical and bibliographical information, see Carmelo Ottaviano,  
 "Riccardo di S. Vittore, Memorie della R. Accademia Nazionale dei  
 Lincei--Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, IV (Rome,  
 1933), 409-543.

July 1967  
 T.B. Duncan