

***Distinctiones*, alphabetical compendium by an unknown author
In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment and paper
Southern France (Avignon?), c. 1375-1425**

i (paper) + 210 + *i* (paper) folios on paper and parchment, the outer bifolium and innermost bifolium of the quire are on parchment, watermark unidentified (difficult to discern), modern foliation in pencil, 1-210, lacking 28 leaves, i.e. a quire of 20 leaves in the beginning and 8 leaves from the quires that survive (collation *i*²⁰ [-10, -11, lacking two leaves after f. 9, with loss of text] *ii-iii*²⁰ *iv*²⁰ [-2, -3, lacking two leaves after f. 59, with loss of text] *v*²⁰ *vi*²² [-22, lacking one leaf after f. 117, with loss of text] *vii*¹⁸ [-1, lacking one leaf after f. 117, with loss of text] *viii*²⁰ [-1, lacking one leaf after f. 134, with loss of text] *ix*²⁰ *x*¹⁸ *xi*²⁰ [-20, lacking one leaf after f. 210, with loss of text]), horizontal catchwords preceded by paragraph marks (*pieds-de-mouche*) in red, alphanumeric signatures in red ink, mostly ruled with lead point and on some leaves (e.g. f. 119) in brown ink (justification c. 173 x 121 mm.), written in brown ink in gothic cursive script (titles in *textualis*) in a single column on c. 36-38 lines, capitals touched in red, paragraph marks and underlining in red, fine 3-line initials throughout alternating in red and blue with pen-flourishing in violet and red extending to the margins, some worm holes on paper leaves (e.g. ff. 109-116), some of the parchment leaves lack parts of their margins (presumably parchment recovered for other purposes), e.g. ff. 18-19 lacking lower margins, ff. 191 and 192 also lacking text, while the text alignment on ff. 126 and 191 shows that these two leaves were originally unusually narrow (145-150 mm.), dark stains due to water damage from f. 89 until the end, but no loss of text, the lower margins of ff. 203-209 and all margins of f. 210 reinforced by paper inserts, a tear on f. 210, otherwise in very good condition. Bound in the late fifteenth century with parchment leaves from a Gradual (text, "Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam . . .") on the front board, "Dominus secus mare Galilee . . ." on the back board; fine decorated initials) over wooden boards, spine lettered "De vitiis & Virtutibus.", slightly stained, but otherwise in very good condition. Dimensions c. 280 x 218 mm.

It is difficult to imagine the use of a work such as the "Distinctions" today, but for medieval readers an alphabetical collection of the various meanings of (or distinctions between) words served many purposes, and they were decidedly popular testifying to widespread use. This one is anonymous, or at least unidentified and thus possibly unique. Collections like this with meanings of words from "bonum" (or good) to "veritas" (or truth) were resources for university teachers, theologians, and students, and most importantly for preachers seeking material for sermons.

PROVENANCE

1. The styles of the script and the decorated penwork initials, especially the use of violet ink for the pen flourishes, suggest localizing the production of the manuscript in southern France, perhaps in Avignon, in the later fourteenth or early fifteenth century, c. 1375-1425.
2. The manuscript has its late fifteenth-century binding. The misleading title, *De vitiis & Virtutibus*, on the spine may perhaps result from the book being mistaken for an encyclopedia. The anonymous *Miroir du monde*, popular at the end of the fifteenth century, for example, was also known as *Tractatus de vitiis et virtutibus* (later merged with

the *Somme le Roi*).

There are a few, very short late medieval notes in the margins, in different hands and inks, that indicate the book's continued use.

TEXT

ff. 1-210v, [begins imperfectly (lacking one quire in the beginning)], incipit, "//et spiritualibus, suffragus invenit bellantes. Est cum eis ... quam alio modo salvare non possunt. [f. 1], Bonum. Notandum quod bona temporalia[?] in[?] nobis reperiri possumus scilicet. Bona naturalia sunt potentie naturae ..., Spiritualia ..., et Acquisita per totum [ends imperfectly in the entry of "Veritas"; lacking one leaf at the end] ... 8^o dicit, se non immundum invenisse insi//".

Unidentified alphabetical distinction collection with the following entries [beginning imperfectly]: Bonum, Bonus, Carcer, Castitas, Clamare, Clemencia, Confessio, Cogitacio, Concepcio, Coniugati, Computare, Consciencia, Convium (convivium), Coronari, Corpus, Corripere, Creatura, Crux, Dampnati (damnati), Dare, Debitor, Decipere, Defectus, Defuncti, Delectacio, Derisio, Detraccio, Deus, Deus (second entry), Dileccio, Disciplina, Divicie, Doctor, Doctores, Doctores (second entry), Dominus, Domus, Domus (second entry), Ducere, Ebrietas, Ecclesia, Electus, Elemosina, Errare, Excusacio, Fama, Felicias, Fides, Filius, Finis, Fructus, Fugere, Gaudium, Genus, Graciarum accio, Hospes, Induere, Infelix, Infirmitas, Ingenium, Ingratus, Immicus, Invidia, Invitare, Ira, Ira Dei, Judex, Judicium humanum, Judicium divinum, Judicium extremum, Justicia, Justus, Justi, Juvenis, Caritas, Laborare, Labor, Letari, Lex, Liberalitas, Liberare, Libido, Loqui, Ludus, Lugere, Luxuria, Magica ars, Magnificare, Malicia, Manus, Manna, Mare, Meditacio sacre scripture, Memoria, Mendacium, Mens, Mensurare, Milites, Misericordia, Mors, Mundus, Murmurare, Nativitas, Negligenciam, Nomine, Oblivio, Operacio, Opus, Oracio, Os, Parcere, Passio, Pater, Paupertas, Pars, Peccatum, Peccata, Peccata (second entry), Peccata (third entry), Peccatum, Peccator, Peccunia (pecunia), Penitens, Penitencia, Penitencie, Penitencie (second entry), Penitencie (third entry), Penitencie (fourth entry), Pervirium, Populus, Predicator, Prelatus, Prelatus (second entry), Prelati, Prelati (second entry), Prelatus (third entry), Prelatus (fourth entry), Prelati (third entry), Prelati (fourth entry), Prelatus (fifth entry), Princeps, Proles, Puer, Pulcritudo, Querere, Regere, Regnum, Regni, Regnum (second entry), Rex, Rex (second entry; initial "P" painted in error), Sacerdos, Sacerdos (second entry), Sacra scriptura, Sacra scriptura (second entry), Sacra scriptura (third entry), Sancti, Sapiencia, Sapiencia (second entry), Sapiencia (third entry), Sapiencia (fourth entry), Sapiencia (fifth entry), Sapiens, Sciencia, Senectus, Signum, Silencium, Sobrietas, Sortilegium, Spes, Spes sanctus, Superbia, Temptare, Transire, Timor, Tristicia, Vendere, Penitere, Venter, Veritas [lacking at least a leaf at the end].

The text includes biblical, classical, and patristic references, as well as near contemporary allusions (e.g. St. Louis is mentioned in the entry on "Coronari" on f. 11, line 19). Most entries begin either "Notandum." or "Sciendum," are carefully structured into paragraphs, and run at least one page, although a few entries are shorter, and some are much longer, such as the entry on Death (*mors*) that fills eight pages (ff. 114v-119v). The most important words are treated in several entries, such as those concerning God, sin, penitence, prelates, priests, and wisdom. The entries also vary in structure. Some carefully "distinguish" the word, discussing its different meanings in turn, supported by examples showing its use in that sense from the Bible and from patristic and medieval authors. The sources cited are impressive and include medieval and

classical authors (for example, Boethius, Ovid, Anselm, etc.). Other entries (such as the one on the magical arts) are more discursive, and even include exempla.

Distinction collections (in Latin, *distinctiones*) were a popular medieval genre from the late twelfth century on. Narrowly defined, distinction collections were lists, often alphabetical, that provided the four senses of meaning (literal, allegorical, anagogic, tropologic) of terms from the Bible. But the contents of actual collections were flexible, and much broader, exploring the meanings of words from many sources in addition to the Bible, according to many more, or indeed, fewer, than these traditional exegetical senses, and illustrating the various uses in a wide variety of sources beyond the Bible. Over the course of the thirteenth century, the entries for each word tended to become longer and more complex, the types of illustrative material tended to grow, as did individual entries, which could extend for numerous pages (Rouse and Rouse, 1974; von Nolcken, 1981). The importance of distinctions for sermons beginning in the thirteenth century cannot be over-stated, but distinctions were also used in many other types of medieval writing.

The contents of this text suggest it almost certainly is not earlier than the second half of the thirteenth century (we thank Marjorie Burghart for sharing her expertise, in correspondence). And although we have not identified the text or the author, we can say that this is not a copy of such well-known distinction collections as those by Peter of Capua, Mauritius Hibernicus, Nicholas de Biard, and Nicholas of Gorran (to name a few of a lengthy list; we thank Marjorie Burghart for consulting her Database for us. Dr. Burghart is the head of Distinguo, a project to develop a knowledge base of *distinctiones* used in medieval preaching; Online Resources).

LITERATURE

Bataillon, Louis-Jacques. "Les instruments de travail des prédicateurs au XIIIe siècle," and "Intermédiaires entre les traités de morale pratique et les sermons: les 'distinctiones' bibliques alphabétiques," in *La Predication au XIIIe siècle en France et Italie : études et documents*, Aldershot and Brookfield, Vermont, 1993.

Bataillon, Louis-Jacques. "The Tradition of Nicolas of Biard's *Distinctiones*," *Viator* 25 (1994), pp. 245-88.

Jullien de Pomerol, M. and J. Montfrin, *La Bibliothèque pontificale à Avignon et un pendentif Peniscola le Grand schisme d'Occident et sa dispersion*, 2 vols, Rome, 1991.

Nolcken, Christina von. "Some Alphabetical Compendia and How Preachers Used Them in Fourteenth-Century England," *Viator* 12 (1981), pp. 271-88.

Rouse, R. H. and M. A. Rouse. "Biblical *Distinctiones* in the Thirteenth Century," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 41 (1974), pp. 27-37.

Wenzel, Siegfried. "*Distinctiones* and Sermons: The *Distinctiones Lathbury (Alphabetum morale)* and Other Collections in Fourteenth-Century England," *Mediaeval Studies* 78 (2016), pp. 181-202.

Wilmart, A. "Un répertoire d'exégèse composé en Angleterre vers le début du XIIIe siècle," *Mémorial Lagrange*, Paris, 1940, pp. 307-346.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Distinctions and Medieval Preaching (Online Conference, June 2020)

<https://distinguo.hypotheses.org/131>

DISTINGUO: a Knowledge Base on "*Distinctiones*," the Backbones of Medieval Preaching

<https://anr.fr/Project-ANR-19-CE27-0016>

TM 1122