

Celia Glastris

5/7/18

FAH 0092-03

Manuscript 12: The Golden Sayings of Giles of Assisi:

The Franciscan Network

Manuscript 12 of Tisch Special Collections, also known as the *Aurea Verba* or *Golden Sayings of the Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi*, is a brief yet peculiar codex. Within its short fourteen leaves, a shorthand version of Giles of Assisi's *Golden Sayings* is accompanied by text lifted from another manuscript at both the upper and lower part. This manuscript offers little aesthetic satisfaction, contains no illuminations, and with its four distinct bookhands present within the manuscript, fails to hold cohesive integrity. Another manuscript held at the University and State Library in Darmstadt has similar features; hastily inscribed and varying bookhands with little ornamentation and additional texts. While it may appear to hold little clues towards its user, both the rejection of stylistics and the dialog between the texts allude to the manuscript as a possible network of exchange between two scribes, and perhaps its purpose as an aid for preparing sermons by a Franciscan friar. Further, through its meagerness, this manuscript in fact mirrors the Franciscan ideology of "poverty, chastity, and obedience."

Giles of Assisi lived from 1190-1262 and was a close friend and foremost follower of Saint Francis, the founder of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, commonly known as the Conventual Franciscans. Franciscans were not bookish intellectuals, but rather were mendicants who studied the Word of God through their practice of asceticism. They preached "poverty,

chastity, and obedience”, as the three knots on their belts symbolized.¹ Aegidius accompanied St. Francis on his pilgrimages through Christendom and the Near East, where they sought to convert non-believers and further faith amongst Christians. During Giles’ travels, he became well known for his sermons and storytelling abilities, and was even sought after by the Pope himself.² Giles never explicitly wrote his *Golden Sayings*, instead his moving speeches were collected and transcribed. The Catholic Encyclopedia states that *The Golden Sayings of Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi* are “short, pithy, popular counsels on Christian perfection, applicable to all classes. Saturated with mysticism, yet exquisitely human and possessing a picturesque vein of originality, they faithfully reflect the early Franciscan spirit and teaching”³. Due to their simplicity, the *Golden Sayings* were commonly used to minister to lay people, as the material was relatable and easy to understand.

This manuscript appears to have been made for personal use, and was likely produced by at least two different people. The *Aurea Verba* initially is written with a semi-cursive, bold gothic bookhand, however mid-sentence on f.7v (see fig. 3) the script changes, to a much more rapidly produced cursive, with ascenders and descenders that dip into the text above and below it, which disfigures the scribe’s own written text, making it less legible. This fast paced ductus and disregard for another reader’s ability to read it alludes to the manuscript’s likely purpose for personal use.

The copy of the *Aurea Dicta* held at Tisch Library contains additional leaves at the upper and lower part of the book that offer further hints towards the manuscript’s intended use.

Manuscript 12 consists of fourteen leaves of ink on paper with one gathering and one singleton.

¹ "The Knots of the Franciscan Cord." St. Francis & the Americas. <https://stfrancis.clas.asu.edu/>

² "Bl. Aegidius of Assisi." Catholic Encyclopedia: Miguel Hidalgo. 2017. <http://www.newadvent.org/>

³ Catholic Encyclopedia

This manuscript contains one each of the sayings present in the later printed versions of the text⁴, and is shorter in comparison to other copies of the *Aurea Verba*, thus likely an abbreviated synopsis of the topics. The commencing leaf tipped into the upper part of the book is paginated as fol. “68” in the top right margin. The final singleton is the only other paginated leaf (“82”) and is similar in bookhand, script size, and layout. Thus, it is likely that these texts were taken from the same manuscript and added into the beginning and ending of the *Aurea Verba* in Manuscript 12.

These additional leaves appear to relate to and offer support to the Sayings of Giles, whether as personal meditation or by connection to another holy text. Antiquarian Booksellers describes that the commencing page (marked Folio 68, see fig. 1) begins with a quotation from Psalm 41, and “concerns spiritual thirst, with themes of wine, grapes and vinegar”⁵. Written in the top margin is an abbreviation of the saying “Trio Genera Hominum (Three Types of Men), those who fight, those who work, and those who pray”⁶, a common medieval saying. At the bottom margin, an inscription writes, “de patientia penultimo fol. A(?)”, alluding to the location of the Saying “On Patience” within Manuscript 12. Further, the recto side of the singleton (see fig. 2) is written in German rather than Latin, and potentially begins with a list of characters from the Old Testament who suffered patiently and follows themes of misfortune, grief, and sorrow along the page. Giles preaches in the section “On Patience” about practicing patience regardless of any misfortune donned upon oneself. He says, “Holy men do good and suffer evil”⁷. The list

⁴ Of Assisi, Giles, and Paschal Robinson. *The Golden Sayings of the Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi*. Dolphin Press, 1907. Refer to index.

⁵ Blackwell’s Rare Books. *Antiquarian and Modern*, Catalog B182. Oxford [n.d.] Bookseller’s Catalog.

⁶ Special thanks to Professor Cristelle Baskins who helped translate the texts on these leaves.

⁷ Robinson, Paschal.

of patriarchs on folio 82 seem to be a study of this statement, perhaps as a meditation for a sermon.

Another 15th century copy of the *Aurea Verba* held at the University Library Darmstadt contains several similarities with the Tisch copy, including a variation in bookhand as well as additive text to the *Golden Sayings* portion (see fig 5-6). The Darmstadt Manuscript also is almost completely bare of any ornamentation other than occasional rubrications and the infrequent doodle. The ink is much lighter, potentially due to wear or a lighter hand. Several different scripts are within this text, however most are also a semi-cursive Gothic bookhand with varying ductuses. Following an index of Giles' Sayings at the end of the *Aurea Verba*, the manuscript severely degrades in quality and legibility (see fig. 6). The final leaf at the lower part of the book includes musical notation, alluding to the use (see fig. 5). While the material is not the same, both added texts appear to supplement the *Aurea Verba* for liturgical purposes and discourse, such as the list of patriarchs that relates to the Saying "On Patience" in the Tisch manuscript, or the potential psalm that concludes the Darmstadt manuscript.

While these two manuscripts seem likely to have been made by and for members of the Franciscan Order, the Carthusian manuscript, *Meditationes de vita Jesu Christi* (see fig. 7), held at University Utrecht, also contains the *Aurea Verba*. Produced in 1458, this manuscript opens up an additional network of possible users. The Carthusian Order of enclosed monastics was widely popular in Germany during the 15th century. While the Franciscan Order of mendicants originated in Italy, both the Tisch and Darmstadt manuscript were produced in Germany. Franciscans did exist in Germany however were more popular in other neighboring countries. It is thus possible that the Tisch manuscript was produced for use by a follower of the Carthusian

Order. Both the Tisch and Darmstadt copies focus on the *Golden Sayings* and add to them specifically, however, while the Carthusian manuscript contains over 400 pages of writings from several holy people. The Tisch and Darmstadt copies thus seem more likely to be made for Franciscans, as they both focus on the sayings of one of the foremost followers of St. Francis.

Further, Manuscript 12 at Tisch Library seems to embody the ideologies of a Franciscan mendicant both textually and aesthetically. Much of the added text focuses on understanding the Saying *On Patience*, which stresses the value of suffering patiently, an idea that relates to the Franciscan practice of asceticism. In addition, Manuscript 12's rejection of any ornamentation and disorganized look created by the shift in bookhand relates to their abstinence from material possessions and devotion to absolute poverty. Lastly, the verso side of the final leaf (see fig.4) ends with a text on friendship. Perhaps then this manuscript served as a collective effort to understand the words of Giles of Assisi between two Franciscans, a sweet finale to the mysterious network of Manuscript 12.

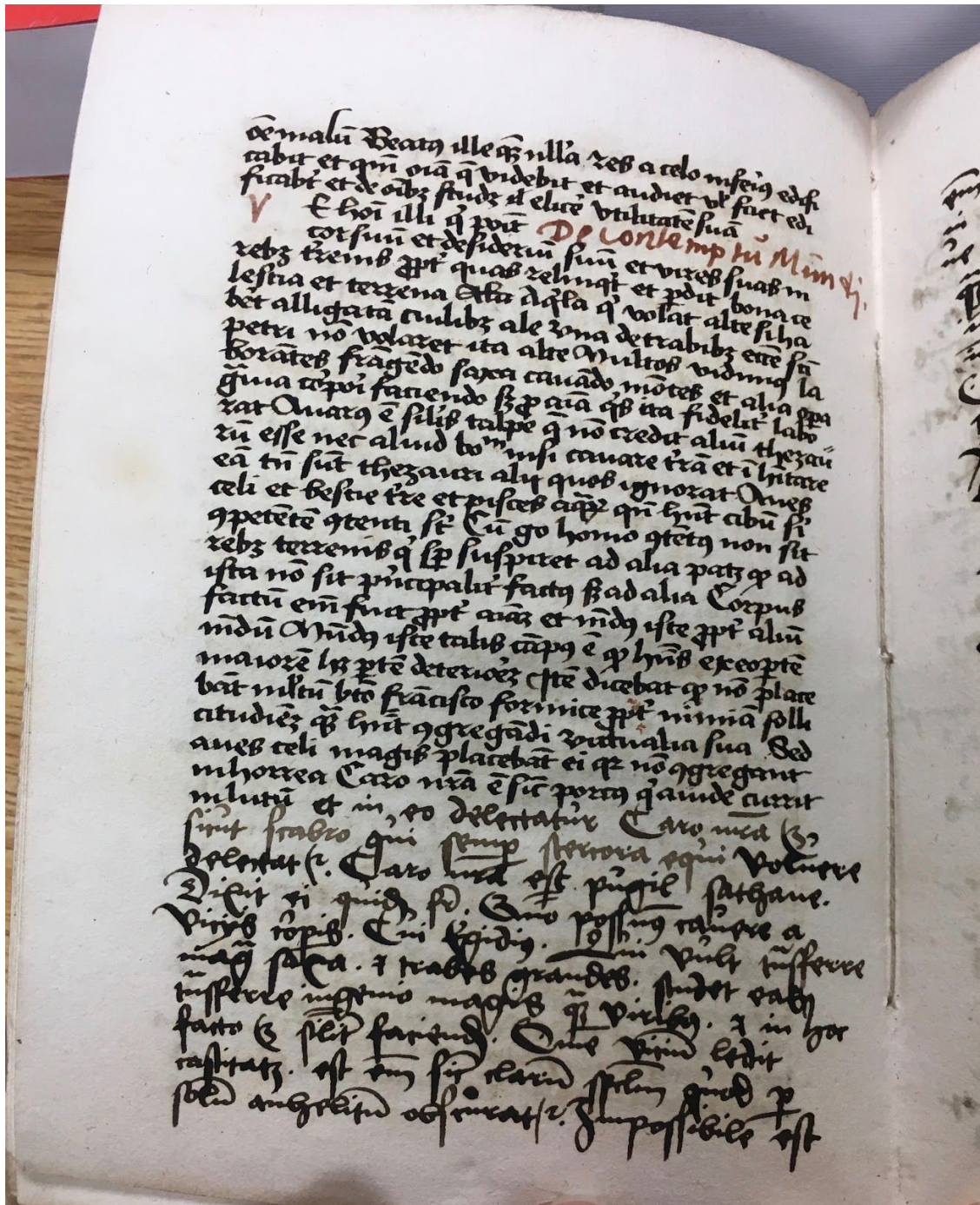


Figure 1, Tisch Library, MS 12, Aurea Verba. F.1r

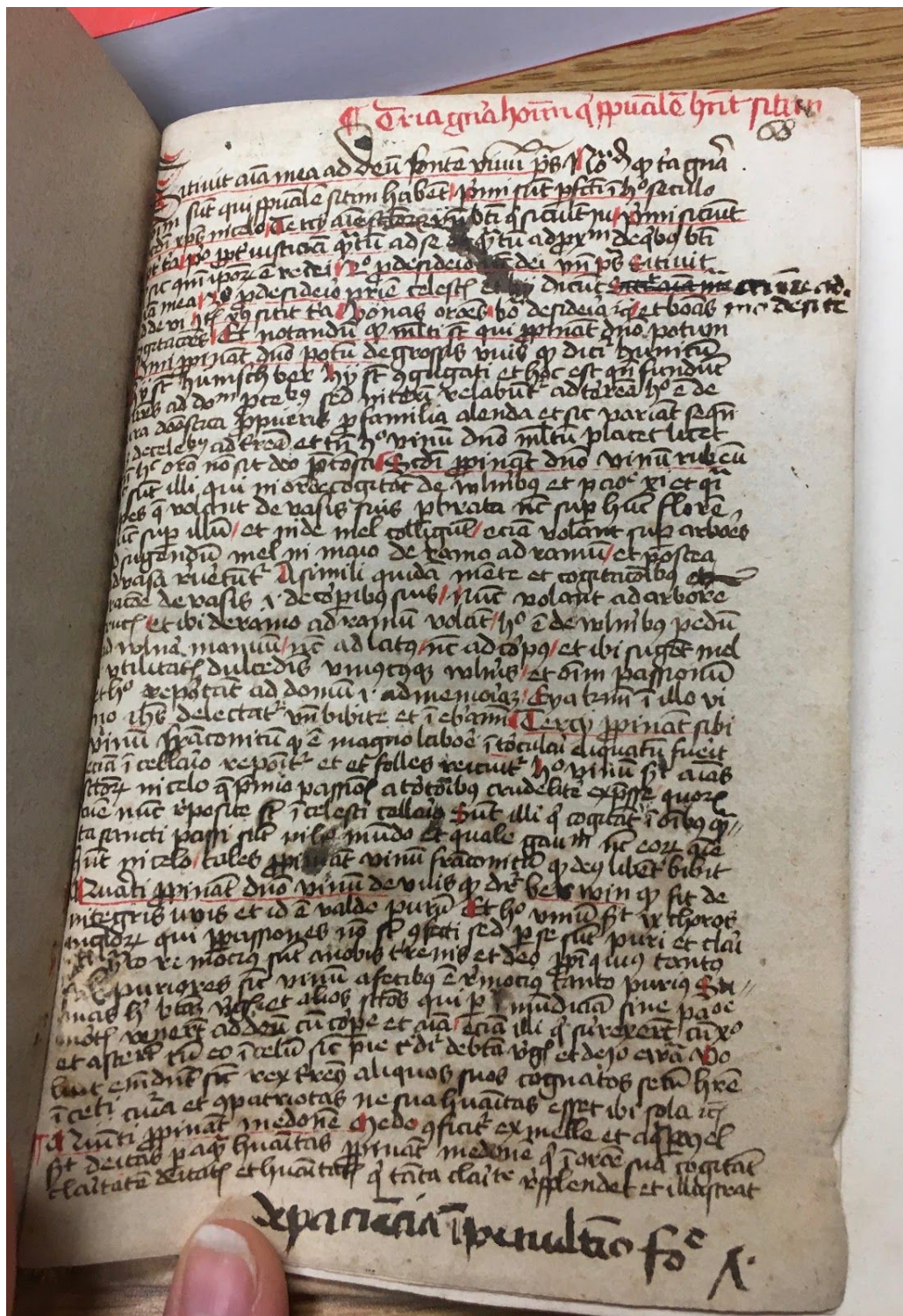


Figure 2, Tisch Library, MS 12, Aurea Verba. f.7v

Trão de amicitia extatico

Amicitia fundat^r sup^r r^a bono m^o vili d^e lⁱ et h^o h^o h^o
Amicitia q^u fundat^r sup^r bono vili noⁿ durat n^o qua^m diu durat
vile vⁿ vⁿ p^o d^e q^u vⁿ p^o fideles m^o amicitia quos m^o noⁿ
q^ua copulat Amicitia q^u fundat^r sup^r bono d^e lⁱ parum
durat quia ablata delectat^r remouet^r amicitia vⁿ q^u
git m^o t^u p^u am^o t^u b^o Amicitia q^u fundat^r sup^r bono h^o n^o q^u
durabilis est et talis est p^o f^o et p^o lⁱ m^o bonos et vⁿ
tuos p^o h^o n^o quia amicitia diligit d^e q^u h^o n^o et vⁿ

Nō indiligēdo autē ista sūt cōsideranda

[illegible]

cleblichheit vñ ob d' d' nach inzerit lust suchet an
 zieleche dingen d' muß mine verbutert werde d' d'
 ch' manigfaltige betropenheit vñ lide vmb d' et leere
 zu got fliche nñc omē mōt frund gottes gzeimpt
 nierget frond o' lust o' tröst zu fliche dñc an got
 alleyn d'c ad' mich ist das got d' n' sñc d'c d' d' d'
 vñ abnēme d'c manigfaltige menschliche gebreche
 der so vil sint d' p' d' d' mit alle m' pñ ver n' r' b' c
 griffe mag dar vñ d' d' d' d' d' sñc gebreche verberge
 sint das wirt nu d' d' d' abge nōmen i' d' d' d' d' d'
 lide vñ behūmen d'c got vñ pñ vñ l' d' d' d' d' d'
 d'c d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d'
 n' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d'
 truppen liden d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d'
 sñc so d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d'
 sñc vñ eigne s' pñ d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d'
 in allen d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d' d'

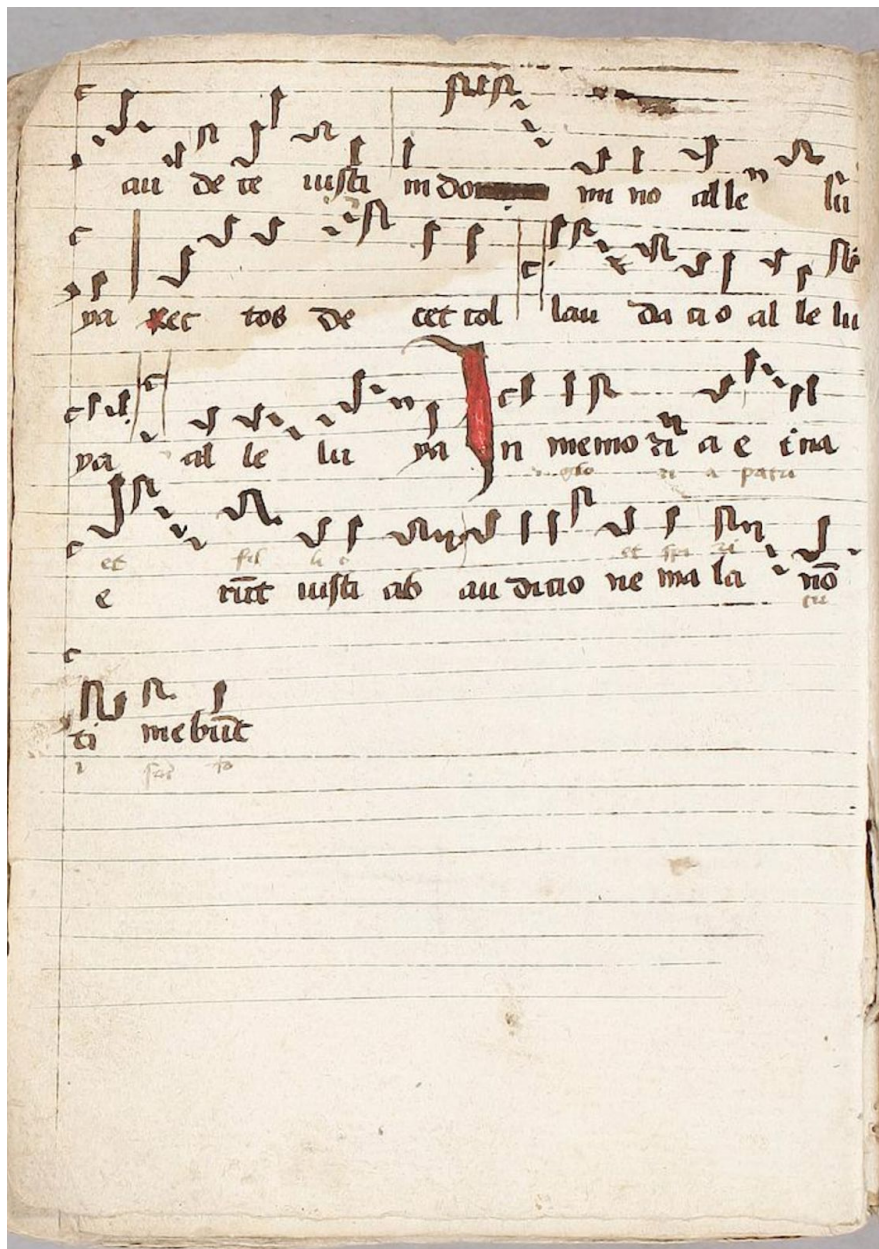


Figure 5, Darmstadt ULB, Ms HS 1087

Sayings of *Aurea Verba* translated by Paschal Robinson

- On virtues and Graces and their Effects and Contrariwise of Vices
- On Faith and the Incomprehensibility of God
- On Love
- On Holy Humility
- On the Holy Fear of the Lord
- On Patience
- On Holy Solitude and Watchfulness of Heart
- On Contempt of the World
- On Holy Chastity
- On Penance
- On Prayer and its Effect
- On Contemplation
- On the Active Life

Sayings listed in MS 12, roughly translated

- “Gratia dei & Virtutibus”
- “De Fide”
- “De dilechiome”
- “De Humilitate”
- “De Timmor e sancto”
- “De Patientia”
- “De Vigilanna cordus”
- “De contemp tu Monde”
- “De guena tentahomium”
- “De studio oraliomis”
- “De habenda spiritualicañuela”
- “De Sciensia vhili se mou ti & p diraho me verbi dei”
- “De Verbis Domini & Malis”
- “De vreitalor p...”
- “De Vreitate Obedientud”
- “De Valing Oedimb: Religioso vilime”