

# Gothic Gold

A PROFESSOR DONATES ONE OF THE WORLD'S RAREST BOOKS TO RUTGERS' COLLECTION OF EARLY PRINTED TEXTS

Carl F. Morrison isn't a collector, but when he spotted [the illuminated manuscript *Scrutinium SC11ptumrum*], an eminent rare book dealer in New York, he knew he had to have it. Morrison, the Lessing Professor of History and Poetics at FAS-New Brunswick, "It is thick with hand-decorated, gilded initials; gorgeous colors; and a replacement binding that incorporates the hand-stamped leather and brass that was part of the original binding."

The book is one of 10 rare items that Morrison donated in the fall to Rutgers' Special Collections and University Archives. Appraised at \$45,000, *Scrutinium*

*Scripturarum*— "scrutiny of the writings"—is part of a total donation worth more than \$100,000. Other items include two pages of a 12th-century Breviary that include a description of the meeting of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and a

poem written by Andre Chenier before facing the guillotine during the French Revolution.

Written by Paul of Burgos, whose Jewish name was Solomon Ben Isaac Ha-Levi, *Scrutinium SC11ptumrum* is the first known printed piece of anti-Semitic literature and provided the foundation for much anti-Jewish discussion when it was published in the 1470s. "It was

Book Librarian Michael Joseph. The book's printer, Johann Mentelin, learned printing from Johannes Gutenberg, who invented the printing press in 1455.

Morrison, a professor of history at Rutgers since 1988 and former

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printed in Strassburg, Germany, the second city where printing took place, but was written in the 13th century by a rabbi [Ha-Levi] who became fervently opposed to Judaism and attacked rabbinical text," says Rutgers' Rare

director of the program in medieval studies, says he bought the books to research the history of political thought, the church, and mysticism. "When I came to the university, a colleague told me, 'Rutgers is the golden door of opportunity for many students,'" says Morrison. "That always stuck with me, and donating these books is my way of opening the door a little wider."

