

JEROME (Saint), [*Vitae Patrum*] *Vita Pauli primi eremitaе; Vita Malchi monachi captivi; Vita Hilarioni*

In Latin, manuscript on parchment  
[Italy, c. 1425]

*II+ 64 folios (i10, ii10, iii10, iv10, v10, vi10, vii5), lacking a quire after f. 20v and f. 60v [incomplete Lives of Malchus and Hilarion; Life of Paul complete], written in a rounded gothic bookhand in black ink on up to 20 long lines (justification 65 x 105 mm), light plummet ruling, catchwords at the end of each quire, some titles in Roman capitals, opening title with capitals touched in red ink, red paragraph mark on fol. 1, rubric in red on fol. 15v, 2-line high in red with light brown ink pen flourishing (f. 15v), 3-line high initial painted in red with light brown ink pen flourishing extending in the margin (f. 1), ownership stamp on f. 1 with arms of a cardinal from the dynasty of the Albani, some contemporary marginal annotations and/or corrections, old shelfmark 544 on f. Iv, crossed out, overall in good condition, some fading of the ink. Bound in a modern light brown pigskin binding, spine sewn on three thongs, title gilt on spine "Manuskript des .XV. Jahrhdt. Vita beati Pauli Apostoli." Dimensions 185 x 130 mm.*

Attractively written manuscript in pocket format and with clean wide margins of Saint Jerome's lives of Paul, Malchus, and Hilarion, writings of considerable narrative charm which exercised an enormous impact on later hagiographic literature and which continued to be widely read throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance.

#### PROVENANCE

1. Script and early proof of ownership all secure an Italian origin; parchment of Italian preparation, initials and penwork consistent with a date early in the fifteenth century.
2. Ex-libris copied in a sixteenth-century hand on fol. 65: "Joannis Baptiste Ballarini Murianensis." This is likely Muro-Lucano, province of Potenza, in Basilicata, southern Italy.
3. Unidentified owner's stamp on fol. 1, a cardinal's hat with the initials R.A.

#### TEXT

ff. 1-15v, Jerome, *Vita Pauli*; heading: *Incipit vita beati Pauli primi heremite feliciter*; incipit "Inter multos s[a]epe dubitatum est a quo potissimum monachorum heremus habitari c[o]epta sit... "; explicit: "[...] Pauli cum meritis eius quam Purpuras cum regnis suis" [PL, XXIII, 17-29];

ff. 15v-27v, Jerome, *Vita Malchi*; rubric, *Incipit feliciter vita Malchi captivi*; incipit, "Qui navali proelio dimicaturi sunt ante in portu et in tranquillo mari flectunt..."; explicit: "[...] Cristo deditum mori posse animum non posse superari" [PL, XXIII, 53-60; see also Mierow, 1946, p. 31-60];

ff. 27v-64v, Jerome, *Vita Hilarioni*; heading: Prologus santi Eronimi in vita beati Ilarionis; incipit, "[S]cripturus vitam beati Ilarionis..."; explicit: "[...] plus illum locum dilexerat. Hic est finis narrationis vite gloriosissimi abbatis Hilarionis. Amen" [PL, XXIII, 29-53; see also Bastiaensen, 1975, p. 72-142].

One of the Church Fathers, Saint Jerome (c. 342-420) is widely known for his contributions to early monasticism, and his many writing-letters, treatises, commentaries on the Scriptures, and a revision of the Vulgate. This is a manuscript copy Jerome's *Three Lives of Hermits*, the *Vita Pauli*, written in 374 or 375, the *Vita Hilarionis*, written in 390 and the *Vita Malchi*, written in 391, which form a trilogy and were often bound together. In these works, which establish Jerome's fame as an author of the ascetic-monastic movement, he addresses an educated Christian readership, one familiar with pagan literature. They demonstrate Jerome's mastery of certain familiar narrative motifs and literary conventions which significantly influenced later hagiographic writing.

Hundreds of copies survive, with 128 extant manuscripts of the *Vita sancti Pauli* antedating the twelfth century, 93 for the *Vita Sancti Hilarionis*, and 94 for the *Vita Sancti Malchi* (Cherf, "The Latin Manuscript Tradition of the *Vita Sancti Pauli*," in Oldfather, 1943, p. 65). Hutnick published in 2002 a bilingual Latin-Dutch edition readily available an electronic format, where he credits the research of Dr. Degorski in a dissertation published in 1987. Over 300 differences are found with the *Patrologia Latina* version. Oldfather (1946) studied the manuscripts of the Latin original and of the Greek versions of the trilogy in preparation for the critical edition of the Latin text in the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL). A variety of early printed editions, Latin and vernacular (see Goff H-194 and passim), witness the wide readership in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance

## LITERATURE

Mierow, C.C. ed. *Classical Essays presented to J.A. Kleist*, St. Louis, 1946.

Moreschini, C and Bastiaensen, A. A. R.. "Vita di Ilarione," in Mohrmann, C. ed., *Vite dei santi del III al VI secolo*, IV, Milano, Mondadori, 1985, pp. 218-236; 261-284.

Labriolle, P. de. *Saint Jérôme et la vie de Paul de Thebes et vie d'Hilarion* (Collection Science et Religion, no. 436), Paris, 1907.

Jerome, Saint. *Vivre au désert: Paul, Malchus, Hilarion*, présenté par Jean Miniac, Grenoble,, 1992

Coleiro, E. "St. Jerome's Lives of the Hermits," in *Vigiliae christianae*, 11 (1947), pp. 161-178.

Oldfather, W.A. *Studies in the Text Tradition of St. Jerome's Vitae Patrum*, Urbana, 1943.

Waddell, Helen. *The Desert Fathers*, New York, 1936.

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

e-text of a bilingual Latin-Dutch edition of the Life of Saint Paul (Vincent Hunink, 2002)

<http://www.let.kun.nl/V.Hunink/paulusthebe.htm>

English translations of Jerome's lives of Paul, Hilarion, and Malchus

<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/TOC.htm> (Christian Classics Ethereal Library)

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