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PSEUDO-ANSELM, *Passio domini nostri Ihesu Christi*, and WALTER HILTON,  
*Contemplationis libri duo*  
In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper  
Italy, Northern (?), dated 6 April 1515

*i* + 150 + *i* leaves on paper (only fragments of watermarks visible, possibly a Basilisk; cf. Briquet, Basilic, 2655, Mantua 1499, and 2656, Ferrara, 1501) complete (collation: *i*<sup>6</sup> [+7], *ii*–*iii*<sup>16</sup>, *iv*–*v*<sup>14</sup>, *vi*<sup>12</sup>, *vii*<sup>16</sup>, *viii*<sup>20</sup>, *ix*–*x*<sup>12</sup>, *xi*<sup>16</sup> [- the last 5, cancelled blanks], most quires with catchwords, some vertical, foliated in pencil at the fore-edge, written with 27 lines in brown ink in a semi-cursive humanistic book-hand, between two verticals ruled in plummet and 28 horizontals ruled in ink, apparently ruled with a 13-nibbed ruling instrument (see e.g. ff. 64, 149v) (justification 140 x 105mm.), rubrics in pink, capitals touched pink, paraph marks in pink, one large initial in pink and one in red (f. 1), spaces for the others (some staining, worming, and natural corrosion, but generally in good condition throughout). Bound in Italian 19<sup>th</sup>-century half cream vellum and marbled paper over pasteboards, the spine with brown and green title-pieces lettered in gilt "PASSIO / D.N.J.C. / A VIRG. MAR[IA]. / REVELATA / ~~~ / ALIA INEDI[TI]' and 'MSS. / CARTACEO.'" Dimensions 207 x 155 mm.

A dated manuscript, and apparently the only known—previously unrecorded—Italian copy of a Latin translation of Walter Hinton's *Ladder of Perfection*, one of the key English mystical works of the fourteenth century. The translation itself may be a unique variant of the standard Latin translation, itself uncommon and unpublished. The first work, a short text by Pseudo-Anselm, is likewise rare and recorded in only one other copy in an English library.

## PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript is dated 6 April 1510 by the scribe at the end of the main text: "Et finem dedi huius scriptionis anno 1510 mense aprilis die 6<sup>a</sup> per gratiam domini nostri yhesu christi" (f.150v). The book may have been written for the scribe's own use, as he does not give his name, and the varying sizes of quires suggest that it was not a professional production. Although it is difficult to establish where in Italy the manuscript was copied with any certainty, there is slight evidence to support an origin in Northern Italy. Although the watermark is only partially visible, it may be a basilisk, comparable to Briquet 2655 and 2656, Mantua 1499 and Ferrara 1501. Moreover, the ruling pattern corresponds to a type found often in Northern Italy by Albert Derolez; see *Codicologie des manuscrits en écriture humanistique sur parchemin*. Bibliologia 5, Turnhout: Brepols, 1984, volume 1, pp. 85-89.

2. Annotated by readers in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and inscribed, presumably in 1609: "Hoc vere est de bonis christianis: haec F.C.P.O.M.d.S.O. / MDCIX" (f. 72v, lower margin, upside-down), and with a former shelfmark "C.13" crossed-through, on what was originally the first page (f. 8), and "A 29" on what was originally the last page (f. 7v).
3. The convent of Santissima Annunziata, Cesena?: a 17<sup>th</sup>(?)-century ownership inscription is effaced but partially legible, and perhaps reads "Co(n)v(en)tus SSae Nunciatae Caesenaе / C.6." (f. 8).
4. Apparently in Spanish ownership by the 19<sup>th</sup> century: at the end of the text is an inscription, "Amigos no tiene ni fin / ni principio – Sino solamente / lo que no es principio ni / es fin / Mui(?) atento B.S.M. / Su Servidore" (i.e. "Friends, it has neither end nor beginning, only something which is neither a beginning nor an end. / Yours obligingly B.S.M. / At your service," f. 150v).
5. New York, Hispanic Society of America, MS B1326 (Faulhaber, pp. 3-4, 27-8, and pl. 25), perhaps acquired by them under the misapprehension that it is Spanish, and deaccessioned after it was realised that it is not. Inscribed in purple pencil on the first flyleaf "Last page / 1510."

## TEXT

ff. 1-7v, Pseudo-Anselm, *Dialogus beatae Mariae et Anselmi de Passioni domini*, rubric, *Incipit Passio Domini nostri ihesu Christi quam dulcissima Virgo maria Beato Anselmo cantuariensi archiepiscopo revelavit. Ut inferius continetur*, prologue incipit, "Ascendam in Palmam, ut apprehendam fructus eius. Cant[ica canticorum 7:8]. Haec verba poterat dicere beatus Anselmus qui desiderio magno desiderabat consequi fructum ... ;" main text incipit, "Beatus Anselmus. Dic mihi carissima domina qualiter fuit passio filii tui incohata ...," text explicit, quia ipsi emerant christum pro 30<sup>ta</sup> denariis. Finis Amen.;"

This short text is in the form of a dialogue between St. Anselm (d. 1109), archbishop of Canterbury, and the Virgin Mary (printed by Migne, *PL*, 159, cols 271A-288B). Anselm was so popular and influential a writer, especially of devotional works and prayers to the Virgin, that works by many other writers were ascribed to him from soon after his death. The only other copy of this text recorded in the *In Principio* database is at Downside Abbey (see N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, II [1977], p. 461 art. 12a). The patterns of worming, and the ownership inscription on f. 8, show that this was originally the second, not first, text in the volume.

ff. 8-150v, Walter Hilton, *The Ladder [or Scale] of Perfection*, in Latin translation: rubric, *Incipit duo libri Contemplationis Magistri Vualteri Hylton canonici regularis, Viri valde contemplativi, Quos scripsit sorori suae incluse, Cum additionibus multis ex libris seraphici Bonaventure ad maiorem roborationem*, Book I text incipit, "Dilecte filii mi in christo ihesu Per illum rogo te ut contentus sis uocatione qua te uocauit Deus ..."; Book I text explicit, "... Hec dicta sunt Uualteri Hyltonensis humillitatis. Et sic finis est ... & aliqua ad contemplatiuum seu ad uite perfectionem. Gratia domini nostri ihesu christi &c." (ff. 8–70); Book II rubric, *Incipit secundus liber magistri Vualteri, & primo [added in the margin: quod homo dicitur] ymago Dei secundum animam & non secundum corpus, & diuiditur in quatuor partes principales. Capitulum primum*; Book II text incipit, "[Q]uoniam multum desideras ac etiam petis intuitu caritatis ..."; Book II text explicit "... &

occultas perceptiones celestum gaudiorum. Ad haec gaudia nos perducatur yhesus christus dominus noster Amen." (ff. 70-150v), followed immediately by the colophon (see Provenance).

Walter Hilton (c. 1343-1396) (on whom see the *Oxford Dictionary of English Biography*) probably studied law at Cambridge, before becoming a hermit, and c. 1386 an Augustinian canon at Thurgarton Priory, Nottinghamshire. He originally wrote the *Ladder* in English for a woman leading the life of an anchoress, but it achieved a popularity and audience far beyond that ever envisioned by Hilton. It became one of the most popular spiritual works of late medieval England, was translated into Latin by 1400, was first printed by Wynken de Worde in 1494, and there were four further editions by 1533.

The *Ladder* was Hilton's greatest work. The first book, which is datable to his early years at Thurgarton, includes advice on meditation and prayer, humility and charity, and the conquest of the capital sins. The second book, completed shortly before his death, views contemplation as an integral aspect of the fulfilment of the life to which all Christians are called.

The standard Latin translation of the Middle English text was made before 1400 by the Carmelite Thomas Fishlake, of which 14 manuscripts are known to survive (including several that are partial or incomplete), all in public collections (see Sharpe, 1997, and Hussey, 1973, pp. 456-76). The Fishlake translation is unpublished, but to judge by the incipits and explicits of the copies at Magdalene College, Oxford, and at York Minster (on which see Neil Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 4 [1992], pp. 725-6), the present manuscript may contain a different translation. Not only has the opening sentence of Book I been changed to address a son ("Dilecte fili") instead of a sister ("Dilecta soror"), as in a few other Latin and English copies, but the mention of Bonaventura in the opening rubric is apparently very unusual, if not unique. Without a detailed textual collation it is not possible to say whether this is a variant of the usual Fishlake translation, or a significantly different—and therefore unique—text, but it may be significant that most other copies name Fishlake as the translator, while this one does not. In either case, as Hussey observes (p. 456), "The Latin text must be taken into account in the preparation of any edition of the English text." Most of the other Latin copies fall into close-knit groups made at or for Carthusian and Bridgettine houses (notably Sheen, Syon, Vadstena, and Villeneuve-les-Avignon). Whether or not the text is a unique translation, this is apparently the only copy produced in Italy of one of the key mystical works of the fourteenth century.

According to the Schoenberg Database, no manuscript of Hilton, in any language, has appeared on the market since 1972.

## LITERATURE

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### ONLINE RESOURCES

Briquet Online (Kommission für Schrift- und Buchwesen des Mittelalters der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften):  
[http://www.ksbm.oeaw.ac.at/\\_scripts/php/briquet.php](http://www.ksbm.oeaw.ac.at/_scripts/php/briquet.php)

The complete text of the *Ladder of Perfection*, in various formats:  
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hilton/ladder.toc.html>

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