

New Testament Commentaries (Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Titus, Philemon, and Apocalypse)

In Latin, with some Greek and Hebrew, manuscript on paper

Low Countries(?), c.1526 [dated colophon, October 14th, 1526]

ii + 527 + ii folios on paper, three watermarks, hand with flower at top, similar to Briquet 11423 (Troyes, 1496; Utrecht, 1493; Châlons-sur-Marne, 1496; Troyes 1500-01), the letter 'P' topped with a flower, similar to Briquet 8742 (Epinal, 1536; Maastricht, 1538), pot with two handles, similar to Briquet 12862 (Douai, 1521), contemporary pagination in ink 1-13 at beginning of manuscript, then contemporary foliation in ink 1-101 [38 not counted] starting at Galatians commentary (f. 185), contemporary foliation in ink 1-97 starting at Ephesians commentary (f. 286), contemporary foliation in ink 1-45 starting at Titus commentary (f. 384), contemporary foliation in ink 1-12 starting at Philemon commentary (f. 428), contemporary foliation in ink 2-88 starting at Apocalypse commentary (f. 441), modern foliation in pencil top right, loose scrap with column of text between ff. 45 and 46, complete but too tightly bound for accurate collation, each commentary in the manuscript comprises a separate codicological unit, all units are gathered in quaternions, in the commentaries to Romans and the Apocalypse the quires are signed a-f, j-z, a-c (Romans) and a-l (Apocalypse), written in a rapid but legible Gothic Hybrida Currens, biblical lemmata written in Gothic semi-textualis with a thicker pen, oxidation from metal bosses (no longer extant) on binding on ff. 1-2 and ff. 520-27, crushed insects (flies) on f. 169v and f. 308v, staining on lower right of f. 185, ink smudged ff. 308-309, staining in left margin ff. 366-383 not affecting text, otherwise good condition. Bound in sixteenth-century blind stamped calf over wooden boards, fleur-de-lis within diamond lattice on the front, circular floral patterns in diamond lattice on the back, similar tooling patterns found on other manuscripts from Cuijk (Sint Aegten, MSS 13, 14, 15, 17, and 20), moderate wear on the front cover, heavy wear on the back, boss holes at corners of both covers, bosses now missing, rebaked in calf in 19th century, red gilt morocco spine label, "COMMENTARII IN EPISTOLAS APOCALYPASIN (sic) ET IN NOV. TEST.", date on bottom of spine in gilt numbering 1526, spine in good condition. Dimensions 305 x 210 mm.

Unique copy (possibly an autograph) of humanist commentaries on the New Testament by a scholar close to Erasmus's circle. This large and impressive manuscript with very wide margins (for further notes?) and frequent corrections in the original hand is earlier or nearly contemporaneous with the first publication of important biblical commentaries by Erasmus. It is certainly an author trained in a Northern center. Like those by Erasmus, the texts deal with pressing theological issues of the Reformation and are important witnesses to Greek learning and to the cutting edge of exegesis in the sixteenth century.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was most likely written in the Low Countries based on the evidence of the watermarks, script, and its later provenance, in the years around 1526. One portion of the manuscript (the commentary on the Apocalypse; ff. 440-527v) is dated in its colophon, October 14, 1526, on f. 527v; since each commentary in this manuscript is a separate codicological unit, however, they may have been copied over a period of time, perhaps several years. The layout and numerous corrections in the original hand suggest that this manuscript may preserve an authorial copy of texts being prepared for publication or for teaching. Evidence of the binding, which is sixteenth century, and a

later ownership note link this manuscript securely to the Crutched Friars of St. Agatha at Cuijk (see below). One could imagine that our manuscript entered their library when the author entered the convent (which leaves the question of its exact place of origin open); alternatively, it is not impossible that these commentaries were copied at Cuijk.

2. A cursive hand of the seventeenth century at the bottom of f. 1 lists the book as the property of "Conventus S. Agathæ prope Cuyck ad Mosam." The Crozier's (or Crutched Friar's) convent of Sint Agatha at Cuijk on the Meuse (North Brabant) in the Southeastern Netherlands, was founded in 1371 and has the distinction of being the only Dutch monastic house continuously inhabited from the Middle Ages to the present. The manuscript was likely bound in its present form at Sint Agatha. Several fifteenth-century manuscripts from the library of Cuijk (Sint Aegten, MSS 13, 14, 15, 17, 20) contain similar bindings and tooling (Online Resources, "Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections").
3. Belonged to Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex (1773-1843), an avid book collector, whose library contained some 50,000 volumes and specialized in theological volumes (Fletcher, 1902, p. 12) Thomas Joseph Pettigrew undertook the acquisition of volumes for the library and compiled a catalogue of its theological contents, *Bibliotheca Sussexiana*, in 1827. This manuscript appears as entry 51 under Latin Manuscripts in Volume 1, Part 1. The Duke's bookplate is pasted on the inside of the front board with the shelf mark "VI H.m.8." (On his collection, see Peter Kidd, Online Resources).
4. Due to the enormous debts that Augustus Frederick assumed during his life, the library he amassed was sold off shortly after his death. This manuscript was sold as lot 208, London, Evans, Thursday, August 1, 1844.

TEXT

f. 1 *Prologus*, incipit, "Romani sunt qui ex iudeis et gentibus...qui beneficia Christi nouit";

The Prologue to Romans in this manuscript derives from several sources. First, there is a prologue similar to the text of Pelagius's Commentary on Romans (Souter, 1922-, vol. 2, p. 6; Stegmüller, 1940-1980, no. 6355). Then, a lemma headed "Ambrosius" begins a second prologue derived from the commentary of Ambrosiaster. The text is similar to the α and β recensions of Ambrosiaster's commentary (Stegmüller, 1940-1980, no. 1249=1261; ed. Vogels, 1966, pp. 4 and 6).

ff. 1v-184, [Commentary on Romans], incipit, "Paulus seruus Iesu Christi uocatus apostolus segregatus in euangelio Dei [Romans 1:1], Teophile. Paulus epistolis suis uotum suum prestabit, quod non fecerunt prophete...Hieronymo Theophilacto quod e Corintho missa sit"; [f. 184v, blank];

The Commentary on Romans in this manuscript is the longest codicological unit and the most complex textually. It contains extracts from a variety of sources and an idiosyncratic, paratextual citation system that uses letters, including 'O', 'F', 'FF', 'H', 'FR', 'T', and 'U' to mark different sorts of glosses and comments. The commentator seems to use a capital Π as a general mark for new lemmata or excerpts, perhaps an abbreviation for "paragraphos." There are also numerous comments with the heading "Sedul." that refer to the ninth-century commentary, the

Collectaneum, compiled by Sedulius Scottus. The appearance of Sedulius' *Collectaneum* is striking in a manuscript of this date because the *editio princeps* of the work only appeared in 1528 in Basel, two years after the date of this manuscript's colophon (Sedulius, 1996, p. 12*). Since each of the commentaries in the manuscript are separate codicological units, it is possible that the commentary on Romans was completed somewhat after the Apocalypse commentary, but still very near the publication date of Sedulius.

The commentary also contains numerous citations to the work of Thomas Aquinas and to the *Annotationes* of Erasmus, another recently published text that appeared in 1516. The dense tangle of sources and the citation system used in this section of the manuscript deserve further study. The commentator here clearly had antiquarian, scholarly, and theological interests that were explored at great breadth and depth.

ff. 185-186v, *In epistolam ad Galatas Argumentum*, incipit, "Galate Greci sunt, sed ex Gallis oriundi...ut sola fides sufficiat abbreviare[?] ex lege";

The text of this prologue seems to be an amalgam of texts that can be found in the *Glossa ordinaria*, Jerome's commentaries on the Pauline epistles, and Augustine.

ff. 186v-284v, [Commentary on Galatians], incipit, "Aperiendum est quod apostolus prouocavit in discipulos...sed cum spiritu, ut spiritualiter conuersemini," *Epistole ad Galatas finis*;

The Commentary on Galatians is also compiled from a number of sources, mostly Jerome, but the second significant source for this commentary are extracts from Erasmus's translation of John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Galatians*. Large portions of the *Homilies* are interspersed with other authorities. The appearance of the text is notable since Erasmus first published the text in 1527 with Johann Froben (Tello, 2023, no. 334). Like the extracts of Sedulius in the Romans commentary, it is uncertain whether the text in this manuscript predates the 1527 edition because of the codicology. Whatever the case, this is an exceptionally early and textually significant use of Erasmus's translation.

ff. 285-286, *In epistolam ad Ephesios proemium*, incipit, "Hanc epistolam Hieronimus uocat mediam... autem Hieronimus Romam deductus sub fideiussore degerere";

The text of this prologue derives in part from Jerome's commentary on Ephesians but lacks direct textual parallels.

ff. 286-383, [Commentary on Ephesians], incipit, "Epistole ad Ephesios caput primum. Paulus apostolus...et domino Iesu Christo. Paulus apostolus, id est legatus non Sathane transfigatus...quia gratia Domini est cum omnibus qui diligunt eum in incorruptione. Missa fuit e Roma ex carcere per Tythum"; [f. 383v, blank];

Marginal citation marks show that Chrysostom, Theophylact of Ohrid, Sedulius Scottus, Augustine, Ambrose, Thomas Aquinas, and Scholia are the primary sources for this commentary on Ephesians. The cluster of sources and frequent recourse to the Greek text of the Epistle is also found in Erasmus' *Annotationes*, published in 1516. However, the text of our commentary is rarely identical to the printed version of the *Annotationes* and could represent an early reworking of the text.

f. 384rv, *Argumentum epistole ad Titum*, incipit, "Titum discipulum suum ac filii loco habitum...sufficiebatque illum tuum breviter admonere. Hieronimus. Epistola scripta est e Nycopoli";

The introduction to Titus seems to be a compilation of Theophylact, Chrysostom, and Jerome.

ff. 384v-427v, [Commentary on Titus], incipit, "Epistole ad Titum Caput Primum. Paulus seruus...saluatore nostro. Paulus seruus dei apostolus autem Iesu Christi. Nominauit hic non nihil formam salutationis...uobis. Omnibus credentibus cum eo erant imprecatur gratiam";

Many lemmata are taken from Erasmus' *Annotationes*, especially the Greek translations. The commentary that follows is often expanded and analyzed in greater depth than in the *Annotationes*. Jerome, Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Theophylact form the core of the commentary. ff. 428-429, *Epistola Pauli ad Philemon praefatio*, incipit, "Vt referunt Hieronimus et Chrysostomus multam autoritatem huius epistole...eumque ut nuperrime regnatum grate susciperet hic Chrysostomus";

The preface mentions Jerome and Chrysostom frequently but does not contain many direct textual parallels.

ff. 429-439v, [Commentary on Philemon], incipit, "Paulus vinctus Christi Iesu...et Domino Iesu Christo. Paulus uinctus Christi Iesu. Amplum hic se non nominat quod est nomen dignitatis...quia qui adheret Domino uiuus spiritus est";

Frequent mentions of Chrysostom, Jerome, and Theophylact comprise the bulk of the commentary.

ff. 440-527v, *In Apocalypsin Beati Iohannis Apostoli*, incipit, "Argumentum. Apocalypsis Iohannis tot habet sacramenta quot uerba ... ac si Deo competent personarum acceptum"; τέλος τῷ θεῷ χάρις. 1526. 14 Octobris.

After a brief introduction taken in part from the common prologue to the Apocalypse (Stegmüller, no. 829) and from the *Glossa ordinaria*, a lengthy commentary on Apocalypse follows, which cites Bede's commentary frequently. There are many citations of the Greek text and even some use of Hebrew at the bottom of f. 493v in a comment on the name of Babylon. This manuscript is an impressive testament to biblical scholarship in the early sixteenth century. The single scribe (who was most likely also the author) who compiled the six commentaries shows great familiarity with the Latin tradition of biblical exegesis, citing Ambrose, Jerome, Bede, Sedulius Scottus, and Thomas Aquinas. Moreover, the scribe was deeply learned in the Greek tradition, citing John Chrysostom (d. 407) and Theophylact of Ohrid (d. c. 1107), two Greek exegetes who were important for Erasmus's understanding of the Greek New Testament. The appearance of both Sedulius and Chrysostom is very surprising, since both authors' works were only printed after 1526, the date of the manuscript's colophon. However, it cannot be stated with certainty whether the manuscript predates the printing of these texts because each commentary comprises a distinct codicological unit. Further study of the manuscript's textual relation to these printed texts could establish a definitive chronology.

Even more important, however, is what we can deduce about our unknown author by studying his sources. The frequent appearance of Chrysostom, Theophylact, and "Scholia" (likely those by pseudo-Oecumenius, called *Graecanica scholia* by Erasmus), as well as the citations from Sedulius, in this manuscript suggests that the commentator was intimately familiar with Erasmus's works, and was at the cutting edge of biblical scholarship in the first half of the sixteenth century. The commentaries on the Pauline Epistles in this manuscript touch upon theological topics that had become hotly debated at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The theology of grace, original sin, and free will were all radically reconceived by Martin Luther (1483-1546) and his opponent Desiderius Erasmus (c.1466-1536), and many of their interpretations relied upon variant readings (often from Greek) from Paul's Letters. The influence of John Chrysostom was slight but tangible in the West in the early Middle Ages. Burgundio of Pisa translated Chrysostom's *Homilies on Matthew* and *Homilies on John* in the twelfth century. (Kennerly, 2023, p. 34) The greatest impetus for a translation of more of Chrysostom's works came during the Pontificate of Nicholas V (1447-1455), when the pope acquired over 350 Greek manuscripts for the Vatican library (which previously held only two Greek

manuscripts), then under construction. Many of the new Greek manuscripts contained works of Chrysostom, which George of Trebizond, Theodore Gaza, and others would translate. (Kennerly, 2023, pp. 62-104) When Erasmus was working on his Greek New Testament, published in 1516, notes and scholia from Chrysostom and Theophylact were present in the margins of some of the manuscripts he used (Bloemendal, in *A Companion*, 2023, p. 79). Many of the insights Erasmus gained from both Chrysostom and Theophylact appear in the *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*, a collection of critical remarks on the text and meaning of the Bible.

The breadth of sources and depth of commentary in this manuscript suggest that its author was an individual of exceptional learning in the sixteenth century. In choosing to comment so thoroughly on Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Titus, Philemon, and the Apocalypse, the author perhaps intended to provide a set of authoritative extracts and original contributions to debates on predestination, justification, grace, original sin, and free will (among other theological topics), either for eventual publication or as a set of lecture notes for teaching.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

"Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex (1773-1843)" (27 May 2012)

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Peter Kidd, "Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex (1773–1843)"

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<https://www.kloostersintagatha.nl/klooster-sint-agatha/geschiedenis/>

Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections. [Search "Cuijk"]

<https://www.mmdc.nl/static/site/index.html>

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