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SAINT JEROME, *Vita Sancti Pauli primae eremitae* [The Life of St. Paul the First Hermit], *Dialogi contra Pelagianos* [Dialogues against the Pelagians], and *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi* [Debate between a Luciferian and an Orthodox]

In Latin, with phrases in Greek, decorated manuscript on parchment

Northern Italy, c. 1450-1475

ii (modern paper) +44 + ii (modern paper) folios on parchment, lacking folios at the end, modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto (collation, i<sup>10</sup> [-1 through 9, with loss of text] ii-iv<sup>10</sup> v<sup>4</sup> [original structure uncertain, now a quire of four, lacking the last leaf]), horizontal catchwords lower inner margins, boxed in quires 2-4, leaf and quire signatures with a letter designating the quire and an Arabic numeral the leaf (some trimmed) starting with quire "i" (originally "g"), horizontal rules in ink, single full-length vertical bounding lines in crayon (justification 165 x 105-102 mm.), written by at least three scribes in neat humanistic bookhands on thirty-nine long lines, changes of hand on ff. 4 and 6v, pale red rubrics, one-line initials within text, four three- to four-line initials in red with pale yellow shiny infill (ff. 4, 4v, 17, 29v), two large twelve-line initials in red, blue, and yellow, both with scrolling banners around an inner staff, f. 1, ten-line "I" extending into the upper margin, with interlace at the top of the initial, and f. 37, five-line red initial with decorative void spaces and arabesque finials (both possibly added later?), f. 3, small original hole in parchment, isolated minor smudges on a few folios but overall in very fine and particularly fresh condition. Bound in modern quarter vellum over paper boards, with a flat spine, un-worn. Dimensions 241 x 165 mm.

Fifteenth-century humanists saw St. Jerome as the ideal Christian scholar, admired for his asceticism and his learning. The central text, the life of St. Paul the hermit, was born of Jerome's own experiences in the desert and became a model for hagiography. The two dialogues included here are among Jerome's less widely circulated works and appear to be relatively uncommon on the market. In pristine condition, this was copied by scribes proficient in writing both Latin and Greek.

## PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of script and decoration indicate that these works were copied in northern Italy, c. 1450-1475. Greek phrases were often included in the text by the main scribes, but there are blank spaces where the Greek was omitted (ff. 28, 32 – in this case even though there is Greek on f. 31). The texts were carefully corrected (cf. the omission copied on f. 17v in a triangle shape, a few variant readings are found in the margin in a contemporary hand, e.g., ff. 1, 1v, 18v).
2. The first leaf of this manuscript (now a singleton from a quire of ten), was once the last leaf in the final quire of another manuscript listed on this site, TM 559. The original codex was a comprehensive collection of texts, all by Jerome, probably copied for someone of wealth. TM 559 includes both (original?) Northern Italian initials, and initials that, like those in the manuscript described here, are rather idiosyncratic, although slightly different in style (ff. 21 and 59). The two large initials in this manuscript (on f. 1, a red 'I' outlined by a spiraling scroll and ending in interlace, and on f. 37, a red 'P' with decorative void spaces within the initials and arabesque finials, the

shaft also adorned with spiral decoration) could be the original initials inspired by twelfth-century decoration (as indeed, were the more usual white vine initials found in many humanist manuscripts), but also may have been added, quite skillfully, at a later point in its history.

3. Both this manuscript and TM 559 belonged to St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie, New York; ink stamp on the first leaf of TM 559, "Bequest of the Rev. Patrick Brady of the Diocese of New York, 1894. To St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, N.Y." Rev. Patrick J. Brady's (d. 1913) donation formed a large part of the original library at St. Joseph's Seminary. They were housed in the Archbishop Corrigan Memorial Library at the seminary (bookplate, front pastedown of TM 559).
4. Collection of Joseph Pope (1921-2010) of Toronto, an investment banker and prominent collector of medieval manuscripts, purchased from Sam Fogg, February, 1996; Bergendal Collection MS 38 (described in Pope, 1999; an overview of the collection is given in Pope, 1997). Formerly bound with Bergendal MS 39, now TM 559 on this site.
5. London, Sotheby's, July 3, 2011, lot 91.

## TEXT

ff. 1-4, *Vita pauli prime heremite*, incipit, "Inter multos sepe dubitatum est ... quam regum purpuras cum regis suis, Amen," *Hieronimus de Vita Sancti Pauli feliciter explicit*;

Jerome, *Vita Sancti Pauli primi eremitae* (Life of St. Paul the First Hermit), BHL no. 6596, Dekkers, 1961 no. 617; printed, Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. 22, col. 17-28; critical edition, Degòrski, 1987; edition with French translation, Leclerc, Morales, and de Vogüé, 2007. English translations, White, 1998, Ewald, 1952, and Fremantle, 1893 (Online resources).

Monasticism was still relatively young during Jerome's lifetime (born c. 347 in Stridon in Dalmatia; died 420 in Bethlehem). Although there were certainly individual hermits and even a few monastic communities earlier, by the early fourth century, significant numbers of men and women withdrew to places far from the cities and dedicated themselves to Christ, and by the middle of that century thousands of hermits were said to be living in the deserts in Egypt and elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean. They saw themselves as the heirs to Christian martyrs, and they were famous for their radical asceticism. Jerome's life of St. Paul of Thebes, written between 375 and 382, was the first life of a desert ascetic written for a Latin-speaking audience. In it, he addresses an educated Christian readership that was familiar with pagan literature. It demonstrates Jerome's mastery of certain familiar narrative motifs and literary conventions, and it was destined to significantly influence later hagiographic writing. It was very widely read during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and hundreds of copies survive, with 128 extant manuscripts dating earlier than the twelfth century, (Cherf, 1943, p. 65). It also circulated in numerous early printed editions in Latin, and in English, French, and German (see GW M50857 and *passim*), witness to its continued importance to readers in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Jerome himself lived an eremitic life in the desert outside of Antioch for several years c. 373. His *Vita Pauli heremita* must reflect his own experiences, as well as the oral stories about the early desert fathers that he heard during those years. Paul the Hermit fled into the desert wilderness c. 250 during the persecutions of Decius and Valerian to a mountainside cave which Jerome says was once used as "a secret mint at the time of Antony's union with Cleopatra" as "Egyptian writers relate." His account focuses on the visit of St. Anthony, the father of monasticism, to the older Paul, who became the aged hermit's first visitor when Paul was 113, and who buried him, with the help of two lions shortly thereafter. Jerome's life focusses on Paul's journey, the marvelous creatures he meets on the way (including a faun with a hooked snout, horned forehead, and goat's feet, who recognizes Christ as savior; Jerome assures his readers that just such a creature was brought to Alexandria in the time of Constantine), and the austere and holy life of both Paul and Anthony. The picture of the two very old holy men being fed miraculously by the raven that brings them a loaf of bread is an enduring one.

ff. 4-37, *Incipit prologus dialogi sancti Hieronymi presbiteri recte fidei contra pelagianum monachum heretici dogmatis repertorem quem sub attici et critobali nominibus uoluit annotari*, incipit, "Scripta iam ad tesifontem epistola in qua ad interrogata respondi . . . etiam in hac parte errorem sequamini," *Explicit dialogus beati hyeronymi presbiteri recte fidei contra pelagyanos et caetera. Laus deo;*

Jerome, *Dialogus contra Pelagianos*; printed Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 23, 495-590; Dekkers, 1961, no. 615; critical edition, Moreschini, 1990. Partial English translation, Fremantle, 1912; (Online resources).

Jerome's *Dialogues against the Pelagians*, one of his last works, written in 415, was a response to the heresies of his contemporary, Pelagius (c. 354-420/40), who denied the concept of original sin. The work is constructed as a dialogue between Atticus, the Catholic, and Critobulus, expressing the Pelagian viewpoint; the appearance of impartiality was important, since it was written before the excommunication of Pelagius in 417/18. Jerome's extensive use of Scripture to support his argument is especially notable. While typically bellicose in his controversial writings, Jerome is less blustering and intemperate than usual in this work, but he does not confine himself to logic and evidenced persuasion; in fact, he does not refrain in the course of his arguments from referring to such things as his opponent's corpulence and the self-deceived notions of his supposed success with women.

ff. 37-44v, *Incipit altercatio Luciferiani et cuiusdam orthodoxi edita a beato hyeronymo presbitero*, incipit, "Proxime accidit ut quidam Lvciferi sectator . . . legis traductos apostolus iterum parturit//"

Jerome, *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi*; Dekkers, 1961, no. 608, printed Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. 23, coll. 153-182B, critical edition, Canellis, 2000, and with a French translation, 2003; here ending imperfectly in section 23 [of 28] (edition, p. 60, line 880). Text survives in 88 manuscripts (Canellis used 82 in the edition), this manuscript mentioned p. 18\*, note 96.

One of the earliest of Jerome's polemical works, dating before 382, this text is was written in response to the Arian controversy, and in particular, the followers of Lucifer Calaritanus, a bishop who refused to be reconciled with those who had once been Arian-Christians who defined the Son as separate from, and subordinate to, God the Father. The text is presented as a debate between Helladius the Luciferian and the wise Orthodoxus, who with citations of Scripture and ruthless logic demonstrates that believers who have renounced the Arian heresy

must be considered as Christians in the eyes of the Church. Kelly describes it as "an instructive witness to Jerome's understanding of the nature of the Church, his respect for tradition as an independent authority, his conviction of the duty of abiding in the Church founded by the Apostles, [and] his horror of sects and schisms" (Kelly, 1975). This work contains the famous phrase, "the whole world groaned, and was astonished to find itself Arian," in reference to the Council of Rimini, 359, a local council that adopted what could be interpreted as the Arian position (its teachings were rejected by Pope Liberius).

St. Jerome, known as the most learned of the Latin Fathers, and as the author of the Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, was an important figure in the fourth-century church, living as a monk, and advocating the ascetic life, as well as responding to theological crises. Baptized in Rome c. 360, he spent the next two decades studying and devoting himself to ascetic life. He travelled East in c. 375 and spent at least two living as a hermit in the desert near Antioch; after leaving the desert he was ordained in Antioch. He returned to Rome to work with Pope Damasus in 382 and began his biblical translations at Damasus's request. He lived the remainder of his life in Bethlehem, to which he traveled in 386. The life of the first Hermit, St. Paul, and his Dialogue are both products of his time in Antioch. The Dialogue against the Pelagians is one of his last works, written in Bethlehem.

Long neglected by scholars, the importance of the writings of the early Church to Renaissance humanists has emerged as a vital and growing topic in modern scholarship (Pabel, 2002, Rice, 1998, see also William, 2006). Alongside the recovery of the texts by the pagan authors from Ancient Greece and Rome, Renaissance humanists eagerly studied and edited the texts by the Fathers of the Church. St. Jerome was held in the highest esteem in fifteenth-century Italy, both for his piety and asceticism and for his scholarship. In the words of Eugene Rice, humanists studied the Church Fathers as models for their ideal of religion, "the union of wisdom and piety with eloquence." (Rice, 1988, p. 25). The texts collected in this pristine humanist manuscript speak to both sides of Jerome. The life of St. Paul of Thebes was born of Jerome's own experiences in the desert, and became a model for hagiography. The two dialogues exemplify Jerome rhetorical skills to expound and defend church doctrine.

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W.H. Fremantle, "[Against the Pelagians](#)," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 6, New York, 1912, pp. 227-83 (partial translation)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.vi.ix.i.html>

Fourth-Century Christianity (brief account of Jerome's life, with a chronological list of his works, editions, translations and so forth)

<http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/jerome-char>TM 841

TM 841