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**AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones; De baptismo contra donatistas; De libero arbitrio; De divinatione demonum; and De diversis questionibus ad Simplicianum***  
 In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper  
 Southern Germany or Northern Austria, c. 1475-1500

*i (modern paper) + 204 + i (modern paper) folios on paper, watermark, Briquet no. 15374, Innsbruck, 1488, and the same type as no. 15376. Rattenberg, 1498, and no. 15391, Regenberg, 1496, modern foliation in pencil, top outer corner recto, 1-204, leaving the first folio unnumbered so that the first written leaf is f. 1, and including the final flyleaf as f. 204 (collation, i-xvii<sup>12</sup>), no catchwords or signatures, ruled in blind, probably on a frame, easily visible on the blank leaves, ff. 200-203 (justification, 238-237 x 146-140 mm.), written under the top line in a legible cursive gothic script in two columns of forty-seven to forty-five lines, majuscules in the text stroked with red, red rubrics, red paragraph marks, one-line initials within the text, two-line calligraphic red initials at the beginning of chapters, some highlighted in yellow wash, thirty exuberant seven- to five-line blue initials used at the beginning of each text, and books within each text, with decorate void spaces within the initial, partially filled with red ink and yellow and green wash, with red pen decoration, often touched with yellow and/or green wash, and with the same type of red pen decoration repeated in the upper and lower margins, or in the three outer margins, independent of any initial, f. 1, also includes "IHS" monogram in the bottom margin, and the decoration forms a border in the outer, bottom and inner margins, in excellent condition, slight staining on blank folio before f. 1, and in the outer margins, f. 1, a few pen tendrils slightly cropped, fore-edges discolored, some leather tabs missing or worn. Bound in an undecorated and unlettered modern vellum binding over thin pasteboard by Atelier Tiemeyer (binder's ticket, inside back cover), in excellent condition, front flyleaf slightly separated; earlier leather tabs mark the beginning of works and books within each work. Dimensions 312 x 210 mm.*

This is a beautifully preserved copy of five works by St. Augustine; the entire manuscript so fresh, crisp, and clean that one could imagine it was written yesterday. The quality of the paper is notable, as are the brightness of the decorated pen initials and the exuberance of the calligraphic embellishments of the small red initials. Manuscripts such as this one form part of the history of reception and study of Augustine's works at the end of the fifteenth century on the eve of the Reformation. The present codex includes copies of texts of Augustine less commonly available.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in Southern Germany in Bavaria, or a little further south in Austria at the end of the fifteenth century, as demonstrated by the watermark. The manuscript itself retains no evidence of its original owner. Augustine was widely read at the end of the fifteenth century, and this manuscript could have been made for a monastic library, or copied for a well-to-do student of theology. Its pristine condition is puzzling, and since there are no

reader's notes or other marginalia, it may have been used as for spiritual reading, rather than for study.

2. Paper fragment laid in, possibly removed from a earlier binding, s. XVII (?) with "Juan," written three times.
3. Sold by Antiquariat Heribert Tenschert, *Leuchtendes Mittelalter I*, 1989, no. 21 ("Cat. Tenschert, Leucht Mittelalter, no. 21," in pencil, inside back cover).
4. Belonged to Joost R. Ritmann (b. 1941), the Dutch businessman and well-known collector of both art and books. Today his library the "Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica" includes more than 20,000 volumes, including around 600 manuscripts, with perhaps 70 dating before 1550. His collection reflects his interest in spirituality, especially the hermetica, alchemy and mysticism, and the beliefs of such groups as the Gnostics, the Cathars, and the Rosicrusians. His bookplate, lettered "Philosophia, hermetica," inside front cover; his sale, London, Sotheby's, 19 June 2001, lot 29; acquired by Percy Barnevik, Sweden, 2001.
5. Resold in London, Christie's, 11 July 2002, lot 27; acquired by Martin Schoyen, Oslo, Norway, and London, UK, whose collection is described as the largest private manuscript collection formed in the twentieth century; Schoyen Collection, MS 5101, their small bookplate, inside front cover; "5101" written on small sticker on spine.
6. Owners' and dealers' notes include, inside front cover, in pencil, "14252," and "43163," and inside back cover, "10090/ AREET," and "3PH 85."

## TEXT

ff. 1-83, *Ex libro retractacionum beati augustini in libros confessionum*, incipit, "Confessionum mearum libri tredecim de bonis et de malis meis deum laudant ...; f. 1, *Incipit liber primus confessionum beati augustini episcopi capitulum primum*, incipit, "Magnus es domine et laudabilis ualde magna uirtus tua ... sic accipietur, sic inuenietur, sic aperietur. Amen." *Explicit liber xiii confessionum beati augustini episcopi*;

Augustine, *Confessiones*, beginning with *Retractationes* II.32; *Clavis patrum* 251; *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 33; *Patrologia Latina* 32:659-868; most recent edition, Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. James J. O'Donnell, Oxford, Clarendon Press, and New York, Oxford University Press, 1992. Numerous English translations including Henry Chadwick, Oxford, 1991, and R.S. Pine-Coffin, Penguin, 1962. Books begin on ff. 6, 9, 13, 18v, 23v, 29v, 35v, 41v, 48, 59v, 66, and 73v.

ff. 83-138v, *Ex secundo libro retractacionum beati augustini episcopi contra donatistas de baptismo paruulorum*, incipit, "Contra donatistas auctoritate beatissimi episcopi et martiris cypriani ...; [f. 83] *Incipit liber primus beati augustini de baptismo paruulorum*, incipit, "In eis libris quos aduersus epistolam parmeniam [sic] qua [sic] dedit ... quia cum eis edificamur in petra. Amen." *Explicit liber septimus beati augustini de baptismo paruulorum*;

Augustine, *De baptismo contra donatistas*, beginning with *Retractationes* II.44; *Clavis patrum* 332; *Patrologia Latina* 43:107-244; edited by Petschenig, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 51, 1908,

pp. 145-375; translated in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, volume 4. Books begin on f. 90v, 96, 102, 111, 120, 130v.

ff. 138v-176, *Incipit primus liber beati augustini episcopi de libero arbitrio, capitulum primum*, incipit, "Dic michi queso te utrum deus non sit auctor mali ... requiescere aliquando conpellit. Amen." *Explicit liber tercius beati augustini episcopi de arbitrio libero*.

Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*; *Clavis patrum* 260; *Patrologia Latina* 32:1221-1310; most recent edition by Green, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, 29, 1970; translated by T. Williams, *Fathers of the Church* 59, 1993, and by M. Pontifex, *Ancient Christian Writers* volume 22, 1955. Books begin on ff. 147 and 160.

ff. 176-179v, *Ex libro secundo retractationum beati augustini episcopi*, incipit, "Per idem tempus accidit michi ...; [f. 176v] *Incipit liber beati augustini episcopi de diuinatione demonum, capitulum primum*, incipit, "Quodam die in diebus sanctis octauarum cum mane ... adiuuat respondebimus. Amen." *Explicit liber beati augustini episcopi de diuinatione demonum*.

Augustine, *Liber de diuinatione demonum*, beginning with *Retractationes* II.56; *Clavis patrum* 306; *Patrologia Latina* 40: 581-92; ed. Zycha, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 41, 1900; translated by R.W. Brown, in *Fathers of the Church* volume 27, 1955.

ff. 180-199, *Ex secundo libro retractationum beati augustini episcopi ad simplicianum*, incipit, "Libros quos episcopus elaborauit duo ..."; [f. 180] *Incipit prefacio beati augustini episcopi ad simplicianum*, incipit, "Domino beatissimo et inenarrabiliter dilectio sincerissima caritate complectendo patri simpliciano ... [f. 180v] Gratissimam sane [sic] atque suauiusam interrogationum tuarum dignationem michi pater simpliciane ... verissima severissimam non recuso is<?; possibly expunged?>. Amen." *Explicit liber secundus eiusdem beati augustini episcopi ad eundem*. *Orate pro scriptore propter deum vnum aue maria. Valet ihesu.* [F. 199v-203v, blank.]

*De diversis questionibus ad Simplicianum*, beginning with *Retractationes* II.27, and with Augustine's Epistle to Simplicianus (Epistle 37; ed. *Patrologia Latina* volume 33); *Clavis patrum* 290; *Patrologia Latina* 40:101-148; ed. *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 44, 1970; translated by J. Burleigh, in *Library of Christian Classics*, volume 6, 1953 (Bk I). Books begin on f. 180v and 191v.

The importance of St. Augustine in the history of Western thought can hardly be exaggerated. In the words of a recent scholar, Augustine from the Middle Ages to the present "has remained the most prominent and most widely studied author in Western Christianity," second only to biblical writers such as Paul (Hubertus Drobner, 2000). It should also be noted that, especially in the modern era, Augustine is still read and studied in a wider, non-religious context, for he is valued as a philosopher and as the author of the autobiography, the *Confessions*.

Augustine (354-430) was born in 354 in Thagaste in North Africa. His mother, Monica was a Christian; his father, Patricius, converted only on his deathbed. Of modest means, Augustine nonetheless was well-educated and studied at Carthage. After various spiritual and moral struggles, known to us through his *Confessions*, Augustine was baptized by St. Ambrose in Milan in 387; he became Bishop of Hippo in 395, a position he held until his death in 430.

Augustine was a prolific writer, composing more than one-hundred and twenty works (James O'Donnell estimates that Augustine left behind 5,000,000 words that survive today). These works

survive in a vast number of manuscripts, which are being catalogued in the series *Die Handschriftliche Überlieferung der Werke des heiligen Augustinus*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, band 263, 267, 276, 281, 289, 292, 350, 601, 645, 685, 688, 791, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1969- <2009>, as well as in numerous printed editions. The first complete printed edition of his work was produced in Basel in 1506.

The manuscript described here includes five works by Augustine. Four of these works are introduced by the relevant section of his *Retractationes*, or *Reconsiderations*. The extreme self-awareness that is revealed in the *Confessions*, one of Augustine's earliest works, is also evident in this work, composed c. 426-6 in the last years of his life. In the *Retractationes*, Augustine lists his writings with comments about their composition and publication, and significantly he also adds corrections where necessary. Augustine's works often circulated with these relevant sections.

The *Confessions*, written c. 397-401, surely his most widely read work, is not only a moving account of a spiritual conversion, but also a text that is valued for its vivid anecdotes of life in late antiquity in North Africa, and as an autobiography distinguished by its unparalleled insights into human psychology. The *Confessions* is divided into thirteen books; the first four tell the story of his early life, and the sins he committed, including the famous story of his theft of pears from a neighbor's tree when he was sixteen; the next four books focus on his teaching at Rome and Milan, ending with the moment of his Conversion: "... a light of confidence poured into my heart, and all the darkness of doubt vanished away." Book nine tells of his grief at his mother's death. The final four books are more philosophical in character, discussing the importance of confession, analyzing time in its relation to the eternal, and the meaning of the Bible and the creation of the world.

*De baptismo contra Donatistas* (*On Baptism, against the Donatists*), written c. 400-1, is one of many works Augustine wrote in response to the problem of the Donatists, a group of believers who formed a separate Christian Church parallel to the Catholic Church. Their existence was an urgent problem in North Africa when Augustine became Bishop. In the course of his writings against the Donatists, Augustine argued for an inclusive view of the Church, which included the entire community. In this work, Augustine argues against the view held by the Donatists that only sacraments bestowed by a pure Church were valid, a viewpoint that led them to believe that Catholics entering their Church could, and often should, be re-baptized.

Both the next and the final text in the manuscript are interesting because they are very early works by Augustine, written before the *Confessions*. *De libero arbitrio*, (*On Free Will*), which dates from c. 388-395, is a philosophical analysis of a problem that would occupy Augustine for much of his life. In contrast to his later works, this treatise, written in response to Manichaean emphasis on the evil of the world, allowed more scope for free will than in Augustine's later works.

*De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* (*Various Questions for Simplicianus*) was written c. 396-7 in response to a request from Simplicianus, his friend and counselor during his time in Milan and eventual successor to Ambrose as bishop there. In the discussion of grace arising from Paul's letter to the Romans, Augustine began to formulate his view of man as essentially sinful, and utterly dependent on the God's freely-given grace for salvation.

*De divinatione demonum* (*On the Prophecies of Demons*), was written c. 406-8, and discusses the problem posed by the ability of demons to prophesize. This is a treatise by Augustine that is very rarely read and discussed today. Nonetheless, it was popular during the Middle Ages.

The question of why these particular texts were chosen for inclusion in this manuscript is an interesting one, and one worthy of further exploration, as part of the history of the reception of Augustine in the later fifteenth century. Based on an informal survey of the catalogues of the surviving manuscripts with texts by St. Augustine, *Die Handschriftliche Überlieferung der Werke des heiligen Augustinus*, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1969-2009 (volumes surveyed include those listing manuscripts now in Italy, Poland, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, Germany and East Germany, and Austria) the popularity of the *Confessions*, stands out, surviving in 235 manuscripts. *De libero arbitrio*, was also very popular, surviving in one hundred and nine manuscripts, followed by *De divinatione demonum*, with eighty-three manuscripts, *De baptismo contra donatistas*, with fifty-five and *De diversis questionibus ad simplicianum*, with thirty-four manuscripts. De Ricci's *Census* and the *Supplement* by Bond and Faye record seven manuscripts of the *Confessions*, two of *De baptismo*, and three of *De libero arbitrio* in the United States; no copies are recorded of *De diversis questionibus* or *De divinatione demonum*, although this last text is included in Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 555. Manuscripts with texts by Augustine are not infrequently available for sale, but, as one would expect, manuscripts of the *Confessions* are by far the most common. This manuscript is thus an opportunity to obtain texts that are less commonly available and in a beautiful pristine copy clearly well cared for by previous owners and with exuberant and attractive penwork decoration.

## LITERATURE

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Drobner, Hubertus R. "Studying Augustine: an Overview of Recent Work," in *Augustine and his Critics; Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, eds. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 18-34.

Fitzgerald, Allan D. *Augustine Through the Ages, an Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, W.B. Eerdmans, 1999.

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O'Donnell, James Joseph. *Augustine, A New Biography*, New York, Ecco, 2005.

James Wetzel. "Snares of Truth: Augustine on Free will and Predestination," in Robert Dodaro & George Lawless, eds., *Augustine and His Critics; Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, eds. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 124-141.

Wills, Garry. *Saint Augustine*, Viking, 1999.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

James O'Donnell, "Augustine, Life and Works"

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/>

James O'Donnell, "Augustine, Christ, and the Soul"

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/>

James O'Donnell, "The *Confessions* of Augustine: An Electronic Edition" (Latin text with commentary):

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/>

Nuova biblioteca Augustiniana (comprehensive Italian site on Saint Augustine and his writings, including his works in Latin (from the PL edition), and Italian translations:

<http://www.augustinus.it/index2.htm>

"Augnet" (life and works of St. Augustine, with extensive bibliography):

<http://www.augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=1341> and bibliography:

<http://www.augnet.org/default.asp?ipageid=280>

English translations of Augustine:

Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (includes the *Confessions*, and *On baptism against the Donatists*):

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/>

"Saint Augustine," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/>