

WILLIAM OF AUVERGNE, *De universo*

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on paper.

Northern Italy, c. 1450-1470, and Rome, c. 1470-1485

i (paper) + 251 + *i* (paper) folios on paper, watermark, scissors, not in Piccard Online, scissors, 3684, Genoa, 1449, and Briquet 3664, Genoa, 1446, similar to Briquet 3685, Florence 1459-60, Naples, 1457, Rome 1470 and 1472, Lucca, 1465, and Venice, 1469 and 1472, early foliation in arabic numerals in ink top outer corner recto, complete (collation, *i-xx¹² xxi¹²* [-12, cancelled with no loss of text]), horizontal catchwords lower inside margin, quire signatures with a letter designating the quire and an arabic numeral the leaf, horizontal rules in ink, single vertical bounding lines in lead, justification, (259-8 x 173-2 mm.), written in two columns of fifty-eight to fifty-nine lines in a small regular cursive gothic hybrida script in dark brown ink, no rubrics (a few headings in text ink before major sections of the text), 3-line initials in red or blue with contrasting penwork in purple or red, five large initials (two 13-line: ff. 54 and 141, three 16-line, ff. 94v, 122v, 224r), initials are bright blue with decorative void spaces within the initial, infilled and on rectangular grounds filled with very fine red and blue penwork including foliate scrolls, edged in beads, with touches of gold-brown or sometimes green wash, f. 1, large fourteen-line ILLUMINATED INITIAL WITH BORDER IN THE TOP AND INNER MARGINS, initial in burgundy and blue, on a polished gold ground, edged in black, with penwork tracery, with leafy acanthus extension continuing in the upper margin in burgundy, dark yellow, green and blue, with large gold balls with black hairlines or spikes, in the inner margin, a splendid REPRESENTATION OF THE SPHERES OF THE UNIVERSE in overlaid colored and painted circles (described in detail below), crackling to gold and slight flaking from edge of miniature, bottom or outer margins cut away from ff. 68-9, 78, 116-17, 122, 129, 131-32, 137, 140, and 250 (occasionally very slightly trimming the outermost line of text), f. 1, slightly darkened, else excellent condition with notably broad margins, very clean and almost pristine, occasional light foxing and slight worming. CONTEMPORARY BLIND-STAMPED BINDING of brown leather over wooden boards, ruled with six sets of triple fillets forming two concentric frames stamped with leafy and ropework tools, separated by blank frames, and a rectangular central compartment with ropework within a circle, decorated overall with small circular plugs (a few possibly with traces of gilding), areas of corners and edges replaced and restored, modern rebacking, spine with five raised bands, two clasps remain, back cover, two modern straps and catches, fore edge lettered (s. XVII?), "Tratta dei Viniverso dio." Dimensions 406 x 282 mm.

This is a remarkably handsome large-format copy of one of William of Auvergne's most significant works, distinguished by its extraordinary illumination of the spheres of the universe. Its first owner was a member of the Papal curia, active in humanist circles in Rome. Known in forty-five manuscripts (none in the U.S.), this is the only copy in private hands. Manuscripts of this text (still lacking a critical edition) are rarely available (two sales of manuscripts other than the present one are recorded in Schoenberg Database, 1947 and 1910).

PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of the script and the penwork initials (both the three-line initials and the large initials at the beginning of sections of the text), overwhelmingly point to an origin in northern Italy around the middle of the fifteenth century. The watermark, a scissors, was particularly common in Genoa (although a similar watermark is found more broadly in both northern Italy, in Venice, and in Florence and Rome, dating between 1457-1472). There are, however, important reasons to link this manuscript to Rome: it was owned by Philippus Barbarycus, and then by a Franciscan convent in Rome, and the style of the illumination on f. 1, points to Rome, c. 1470-1485. It therefore seems possible that the manuscript was copied in Northern Italy and then illuminated (and possibly

corrected) in Rome. Philippus is known in Rome c. 1445-1484 (see below), but he was from Venice, and thus had ties with northern Italy.

2. Belonged to Philippus Barbarycus of Venice, who very likely commissioned the illumination of this manuscript in Rome (see discussion below), a papal protonotary (a very important office in the Papal Curia); presented by him to the Franciscan Convent in Trastevere in Rome ("Transtyberim in urbe"), on the condition that the book not be sold and be reserved for the owner's use during his lifetime: inscription added at the end of the text in an italic script, f. 251, "Dominus phylippus Barbarycus nobilis Venetus protonotarius numerarius largitus est hunc librum de universo corporali et spirituali Gulielmi episcopi parisiensis conuentui sancti francisci Transtyberim de urbe. Non vendatur nec alienetur, usum tamen huius in vita sua sibi reseruauit." (Lord Philip Barbarycus, a noble of Venice, papal pronotary and accountant ["numerarius"] gives this book, *On the Corporal and Spiritual Universe*, by William, bishop of Paris, to the convent of St. Francis of Transtiber of the city. It shall not be sold nor alienated, and its use is reserved to its owner for his lifetime"). The earliest Franciscan Convent in Rome (S. Francis de Ripa), was established in Trastevere in 1229 (Moorman, 1983, pp. 413-415).

Philippus Barbarycus (Filippo Barbarigo) was an important member of the Papal Curia, who frequented Roman humanist circles. A childhood friend of Pope Paul II (pope from 1464-1471), he was himself the author of humanist verses, and is known through various documents (including his appointment as Papal pronotary of Francesco Colonna, the possibly author of the *Hypnerotomachia*), and letters (Colonna, 2011, pp. 51-58; Kristeller, *Iter*, vol. I, p. 129, and II, p. 365). The evidence suggests he was active in Rome c. 1445-1484 (Göllers, 1905, p.154). He is known to have owned a number of books besides this manuscript, including three incunables now in Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. B. 103, Triv. Inc. B. 104, and a copy of Cicero's works printed by Sweynheym and Pannartz in 1471, Triv. Inc. B. 102/1-2, which he also gave to the Franciscans of Transtiber, and which includes a very similar *ex-dono* inscription.

This manuscript is notable for the meticulous, and surprisingly numerous, corrections found throughout, both within the body of the text (over erasures), and in the margins. There are numerous pages where the majority of lines include corrections within the text. Whereas the text itself is copied in a thoroughly gothic script, the corrector's script is a good humanist noting hand. On f. 244v, there is evidence of a major error; an extensive passage is copied in the margin by the corrector, who then added "vacat" alongside the text copied by the scribe (in the wrong place) on f. 245rv. It is interesting to speculate whether this manuscript is therefore evidence of a particularly good corrector, or a particularly poor scribe. A study of these extensive corrections would certainly be of interest; it seems possible that the text was corrected in Rome in the circle of Philippus Barbarycus.

3. A damaged and very faded inscription at the top of fol.1r is partly readable as "liber ... s. francisci Transtyberim de urbe"; earlier description (Sam Fogg, 1991) records that the back cover includes evidence the text was once chained for use in the convent's reference library (the binding has been restored since this time, and this is no longer extant).

4. f. 1, very bottom inner margin, shelfmark, "VI.17"; earlier description (Sam Fogg, 1991), recorded another shelf mark on the spine (no longer extant, since the manuscript has been rebacked), "Q.II.1." f. 1, outer margin, eighteenth-century note, "Gulelmus Parisiensis de Vinerso Corporali et spirituali Libris tres."
5. Belonged to Robert B. Honeyman (1897-1987), engineer and noted collector, who assembled an important library of books and manuscripts associated with the history of science; his MS Gen. sci. 5 (Bond and Faye, 1962, p. 20, no.5; Kristeller, *Iter*, 1990, vol. V, p. 389), bought from Zeitlin and Ver Brugge in 1957 (Schoenberg Database no. 12222 also records Laurence Witten, Cat. 4, 1957, no. 47, unverified); Honeyman sale, London, Sotheby's, 2 May 1979, lot 1100 to Nico Israel.
6. H. P. Kraus, Cat. 155, 1980, no. 7; Sam Fogg, Cat. 14, 1991, no. 26.
7. Belonged to Joost R. Ritman (b. 1941), the Dutch businessman and distinguished collector of art and books, who acquired it from Kraus; Bibliotheca Philosophia Hermetica MS 161; described in Gentile, 1999, pp. 244-6, no. 44, pl. 44, reproducing f. 1; briefly described in Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections (Online Resources).

TEXT

ff. 1-53v, incipit, "Sciencia de universo dicitur secundum duas intentiones quarum alta [sic] est philosophia complete ex aggregacione ... et de aliis que circa hoc sunt loquar in sequentibus," *Explicit prima pars istius partis principalis de uniuerso corporali*;

ff. 54-94, incipit, "Sequitur ea que precesserunt investigare de ipso universo ... est declaramus et intelligibilem facimus," *Explicit secunda pars istius partis principalis de uniuerso corporali*; [Ends mid-f. 94; remainder blank];

ff. 94v-121v, incipit, "Post hec autem aggrediar loqui de gubernatione vniversi ... vita seculorum id est fons vite et dator omni quod uiuit in unoquoque seculorum," *Explicit tercia pars de uniuerso corporali et est finis primi libri diuinalis magisterii*; [f. 122, blank];

ff. 122v-140v, incipit, "Honoret te deus quoniam et tu ipsum non parum acceptabiliter honoras amando ... et in ultimate spaciositatis," *Explicit prima pars de uniuerso spirituali*; [Ends near bottom, f. 140v, leaving last lines blank];

ff. 141-223v, incipit, "Hiis igitur determinatis reuertar ... iudiciisque earum perstrepunt," *Explicit secunda pars que est de uniuerso spirituali*; [Ends near top, f. 223v; remainder blank];

ff. 224-251, incipit, "Postquam auxilio dei eo usque deduxi ... et prout se habet veritas auctori bonorum omnium deo attribuas cum actionibus graciaram," *Explicit tercia et ultima pars tractatus de uniuerso*; [f. 251v, blank].

William of Auvergne, *De Universo*; Ottman, 2005, lists forty-four manuscripts, not including this one (one formerly at Chartres, destroyed in World War II), dating from the thirteenth (a single manuscript) through the seventeenth century (again, a single manuscript). The popularity of

William's work in the fifteenth century is demonstrated by the surviving manuscripts; of the manuscripts listed by Ottoman with a date (and it should be noted that there are manuscripts in her list where there are no dates recorded, some of which are certainly thirteenth-century copies), most are fifteenth century. A study of these manuscripts, together with the manuscript described here, and their provenance, would be of interest in analyzing the influence of this text in the later Middle Ages, and in particular, in humanist circles. There is no modern critical edition of the text; printed in William of Auvergne, *Opera Omnia*, 1674, pp. 593-1074; partial English translations by Teske, 1998, and 2007, based on the 1674 edition; Teske observes that there is a need for a modern critical edition.

ILLUMINATION

The miniature of the spheres of the universe on f.1 is an extraordinary, innovative image that shows the spheres as a series of overlapping discs that tumble down the page from a golden arch at the top, to the circles of the earth at the very bottom (as a previous description aptly phrased it, cascading down the page like a stack of coins which have tumbled over). The decision to include an image of the spheres of the universe at the beginning of this lengthy theological treatise was an extraordinary one (to our knowledge, this manuscript is the only manuscript of William's text that is illustrated in this way), and it seems likely that it was included at the request of Philippus Barbarycus himself. The transformation of the usual circular image of the celestial spheres into the dazzling vertical image found here speaks of an artist with unusual talent and the boldness to break with tradition.

The heavens are depicted in brightly burnished gold, followed by the expanses of the universe, with glittering liquid-gold rays flecked onto a yellow ground, to the stars, the planets, the sun and the moon, and the earthly elements of fire (here as flames), air (with two tiny flying insects), water (with two fish) and finally the earth (with dark and brooding primeval forests) at the foot of the page.

The style of the illumination has links with northeastern Italy, but seems most likely to have been completed in Rome; it can be compared with the decoration in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canon. Liturg. 386 (Pächt and Alexander, 1970, vol. II, p. 35, no. 362, and pl. XXXIV, esp. fig.362c), which was at least partially the work of the Master of the della Rovere Missals, who may possibly be identified as Jacopo Ravaldi (Jacques Ravaud?), a French artist who was active in Rome and in France, c. 1467-1506, who illuminated manuscripts for Cardinal Domenico della Rovere (1442-1501) and Pope Sixtus IV (1414-1484, Pope from 1471); on this artist, see Levi d'Ancona, 1959; Avril and Reynaud, 1993, pp. 290-292; Dykmans, 1983, and Quazza, 1990).

William of Auvergne (c. 1180/90-1249) was probably born in Aurillac in the province of Auvergne. By 1223 he was a canon of Notre Dame, and by 1225 a professor of theology at the University of Paris. In 1228, he was appointed Bishop of Paris, a position he occupied until his death. He was an influential friend of St. Louis (King Louis IX, 1214-70). As a bishop, he was an important member of the church hierarchy, who took his responsibilities as pastor seriously, as well as continuing his activities as a remarkably prolific author.

De Universo (or *De Universo creaturarum*, On the Universe of Creatures) was written late in William's career, c. 1236-1240. It is a substantial work (six hundred pages in the printed edition), divided into two principal parts; our manuscript is complete and includes the entire text. The first

principal part deals with what we would consider cosmology, and William calls the corporeal universe; it is itself divided into three parts: part one begins by arguing that there is only one first principal, a refutation of the Cathar dualists, here called the Manichees, who represented an extremely pressing challenge to the church in William's lifetime, then explores topics related to the oneness of the universe, and its structure and creation (chapters 32-45, which include discussions of the empyreum, the order of the heavens, the firmament, etc., are all relevant to the illumination at the beginning of the manuscript), the nature of matter and the elements, purgatory, and hell; the second part discusses beginning of the universe, the nature of God's eternity, and related questions, and the third and final part discusses God's providence over creation. The second principal part of *De Universo* discusses the spiritual universe, discussing in the first part Aristotelian substances or intelligences and creation; the second part discusses angels, detailing their power and function and relations with humans; the final part deals with demons and devils.

William was a prolific author. His philosophical and theological opus include seven separate treatises (including the treatise in our manuscript) that together are an expression of a system of thought as comprehensive as the major theological *summae* of later thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas: *De primo principio*, or *De trinitate* (On the First Principle or On the Trinity); *De universo creaturarum* (On the Universe of Creatures); *De anima* (On the Soul); *Cur Deus homo* (Why God became Man); *De fide et legibus* (On Faith and Laws); *De sacramentis* (On the Sacraments); and *De virtutibus et mori* (On Virtues and Morals). Among his other works are *De bono et malo* (On Good and Evil), *De immortalitate animae* (On the Immortality of the Soul), *De gratia et libero arbitrio* (On Grace and Free Choice), sermons, and a guide to preaching (overview, Ottman, 2005; sermons edited by Morenzoni, 2010-2013).

William lived at a pivotal time in the history of medieval philosophy, and belonged to the first generation of thinkers in the Latin West who grappled with the implications of the new Latin translations of writings on natural philosophy and metaphysics by Greek, Islamic and Jewish thinkers. His career as bishop spanned critical years in the growth of the university of Paris and in the history of the church. He has emerged in recent decades as an important figure in the history of medieval philosophy and theology; the international colloquium in 2001, "Autour de Guillaume d'Auvergne" (Morenzoni, Tilliette, 2005), and the recent editions of his sermons (Morenzoni, 2010-13) are evidence of the broad interest in his writings and career among contemporary scholars; his substantial corpus of writings represent an important, and still understudied, source for our understanding of medieval philosophy and theology.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

The Ritman Library (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica)

<http://www.ritmanlibrary.com/collection/collection-profile/>

Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections (as Amsterdam, BPH, MS 161)

<http://www.mmdc.nl/static/site/>

Watermarks, Piccard Online

<http://www.piccard-online.de/ergebnis1.php>

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