

PSEUDO-AUGUSTINUS, *Sermones ad fratres in eremo* (Sermons to the Brothers in the Desert); Publius Lentulus, *Epistola de forma et statura Jesu Christi ad Senatum romanum* (Letter on the form and stature of Jesus Christ to the Roman Senate); sermon by AUGUSTINE

In Latin, manuscript on paper  
Northern Italy, 1458

64 folios on paper (watermarks, unidentified hunting horn suspended from a knotted cord quires i-iv, same general type as Piccard Online 119604, Udine, 1429 or 119531, Venice, 1484, among many others, and an unidentified circle enclosing a rectangle containing an illegible heraldic device quires v-vi), contemporary foliation 1-72 lacking ff. 63-70 with loss of text (collation i-v<sup>12</sup> vi<sup>4</sup> [of 12, lacking 3-10]), no catchwords or signatures, unruled but with vertical bounding lines obtained by creasing the paper (written space 170-190 x 108-115 mm.), copied in 30-36 long lines in an informal cursive script (*mercantesca*) by a single scribe, sermon titles in the same hand as the text, calligraphic initial by scribe and first word of each sermon in the left margin, contemporary marginal annotations including *nota bene* symbols and corrections to or clarifications of the text, occasional light stains mostly to margins (ff. 1-13, 72rv), a few small marginal tears, small wormhole to ff. 1-2 with loss of one or two letters of text, tiny worm holes in lower margins of ff. 1-6, some worming to upper and lower inner corners of parchment pastedowns front and back, otherwise in excellent condition. CONTEMPORARY, ORIGINAL BINDING of leather spine over wooden boards (minor worming, old repairs to spine), parchment guards at outside and at center of each quire, remains of tawed leather strap closure attached to front board and wrapping to catch on a pin now missing from back board, evidence of chain hasp attached to lower back board by three nails (minor splitting along the line of nail holes), parchment flyleaves with table of contents by original scribe on front pastedown and fourteenth-century document on pasted-down side of back pastedown, contemporary inscription perhaps by scribe on back board "Sermones sancti Augustini ad heremitas" and illegible text on leather spine, remains of old paper label on spine. Dimensions: 223 x 150 mm. (deckle edges visible at outer and lower edges of text block).

This is an excellent example of a late medieval codex copied by an identified scribe for his personal use. Its distinctive *mercantesca* script, lack of decoration, and sturdy original binding set it apart from contemporary humanist manuscripts, whether owner-produced or made by the commercial book trade. The text, attributed to St. Augustine but certainly a later compilation, was a medieval best seller. Here we find selections from the pseudo-Augustinian collection combined with other texts, perhaps chosen by the scribe, including an apocryphal account of Christ's appearance.

## PROVENANCE

1. Copied in 1458 by Bartolomeus de Zachariis, as attested by the colophon on f. 62: "Ego Bartolomeus de Zachariis complevi hunc librum mediante gratia dei domini nostril yhesu christi die lune Januarii 1458 ora quasi 2<sup>a</sup> noctis laus deo" (this scribe not listed in Krämer, Online resources). The Zaccaria were a noble family attested in Genoa from the

twelfth century. The scribe does not identify himself as a member of a religious order but presumably copied these sermons for his own use in preaching. His choice of script is noteworthy; *mercantesca*, as the name indicates, was a cursive script that was originally used in commercial contexts. It was the script of merchants, bankers, painters, sculptors, architects, artisans, and others, who learned to read and write in the vernacular. By the fifteenth century it was also used in more formal contexts, including in manuscript books, but it is an unusual choice for a collection of Latin sermons.

Some of the marginal corrections are apparently by the scribe. Others, by slightly later readers, provide clarifications of scribbled words or abbreviations in the text. Other notes by the original scribe include underlines of brief passages in the text, squiggled vertical lines in the margin marking significant texts, and charming *nota bene* symbols in the shape of a clover leaf, that is consisting of three dots arranged in a triangle with a comma-shaped mark for a stem.

2. The library of a Dominican convent, possibly in Verona, according to a 15<sup>th</sup> century inscription on f. 72v: "*Iste liber est conventus V[er]on[ensis] ordinis predicatorum datus conventui ab heredibus domini Bartolomei de Zachariis. In 13<sup>o</sup> bancho a dextris 13<sup>us</sup>.*"

In the mid-fifteenth century there were Dominican houses in both Genoa and Verona, as well as many other northern Italian cities. The Dominican Order was an early presence in Verona, c. 1220; their church of St. Anastasia, begun in the thirteenth century, c. 1280-1290 is the largest church in Verona, and home to the fresco of *Saint George and the Princess* (c. 1433-1438) by Antonio Pisano, also known as Pisanello.

## TEXT

ff. 1-62, *Incipiunt Sermones Sancti Augustini ad heremitas. Sermo primus de vita solitaria*, incipit, "*Fratres mei, et leticia cordis mei, corona mea, et gaudium meum quod estis, pax vobis, et karitas cum fide semper inter nos adimpleatur. Quia me putastis materie esse animarum vestrarum ...; ... [f. 60v], De vocatione vestra. sermo xxxvii. Videte vocationem vestram fratres karissimi. Venire quidem ad heremum summam perfectionem est ... Acquisita salute gaudistis ipso prestante qui est trinum et unus, amen,*" *Expliciunt sermones Sancti Augustini ad heremitas*,

Pseudo-Augustine, *Sermones ad fratres in eremo* (also known as the *Sermones ad heremitas*); printed in Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. 40, col. 1233-1358. This manuscript includes thirty-seven sequentially numbered sermons, of which twenty-nine are found in this Migne edition (PL vol. 40, nos. 1-4, 6-18, 26, 19-23, 25, 5, 44, 43, 54, 60), intercalated with eight additional sermons, the first four of which have not been identified in Machielsen, 1990, the *Patrologia latina* database or the Library of Latin Texts (for both, see Online Resources); one, as noted below was printed in Migne, PL vol. 67, as Caesarius of Arles, the remaining may also be related to homilies attributed to Caesarius in this volume of Migne (they share incipits, but appear diverge from the text printed in Migne).

PL vol. 40, nos. 1-4, 6-18, 26, 19-23, 25, ff. 37v-38v, *Quod mortaliter peccat qui falsum iurat vel iurare facit. sermo xxv*, incipit, "*Licet fratres carissimi Nudius tercius sermonem vel caritati vestra perficerim ... adiuvat nos Christus filius dei vivi qui est benedictus in secula seculorum, amen,*"

[not in Machielsen, 1990]; PL vol. 40, 5, 44, ff. 46-47v, *Quod virgo maria remansit in fide tempore passionis et capitulum de passionis*, xxviii, incipit, "Legimus fratres karissimi sanctum martirem Ciprianum dixisse quod in cena domini tres mensse parate ... sed nostra suficiencia ex deo est qui est benedictus in secula," [not in Machielsen, 1990]; ff. 47v-49, *De caritate que portat pondera*, sermo xxviii, incipit, "Dicuntur cor... [?] fratres karissimi me Cartagim videsse recorder ... securi ergo speremus in eterno verbo quod fallere non potest," [not in Machielsen, 1990]; PL vol. 40, nos. 43, 54, ff. 52v-54, *De sancto alleluia*, sermo xxxii, incipit, "Precipitur nobis fratres karissimi quod sanctum alleluia in ecclesia sancta cantemus frequenter ... ut in expositione salmi Laudate dominum de cellis," [not in Machielsen]; PL vol. 40, no. 60, ff. 56-58, *De negligentia*, sermo xxxiii, incipit, "Sicut a nobis dominus per subsetorum [?] officium necessitatem loquendi deponit ... iudicaturus yhesus christus dominus noster qui cum patre et spiritui sancto vivit et regnat in secula seculorum, amen" [Caesarius of Arles, homily 6, PL vol. 67, col. 1056-1059]; ff. 58-59v, *De loco pugne et non pignore*, sermo xxxv, incipit, "Ad locum istum karissimi non ad securitatem sed ad pugnam ... In hoc agone desiderantes ut sanctorum patrum mereamur esse consortes prestante domino nostro yhesu christo qui cum patre et spiritui sancto vivit et regnat in secula seculorum, amen" [Begins as Caesarius of Arles, homily 7, PL vol. 67, col. 1059-1062]; ff. 59v-60v, *Sermo xxxvi de modo habitandi in congregationem*, incipit, "Ad hoc itaque fratres karissimi ad istum locum venimus ut deo vacare possumus ... ad munera sua venimus qui cum eterno patre vivit et regnat in secula seculorum" [Begins as Caesarius of Arles, homily 9, PL vol. 67, col. 1066-1067]; ff. 60v-62, *De vocatione vestra sermo xxxvii*, incipit, "Videte vocationem vestrum fratres karissimi venire quidem ad heremum ... Acquisita salute gaudistis ipso prestante qui est trinum et unus, amen" [Begins as Caesarius of Arles, homily 10, PL vol. 67, col. 1067-1069], *Expliciunt sermones Sancti Augustini ad heremitas*,

This collection of sermons was attributed in manuscripts and in early printed editions to St. Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo, and author of the *Confessions* and the *City of God* (among other works); the reputation of this Father of the Church undoubtedly contributed to the popularity and influence of the sermons. The story of the origin of the collection and its development is complex, and there are many unanswered questions. It is now accepted that the collection was not the work of the twelfth-century preacher Geoffroy Babion, as was once thought (Bonnes, 1945-46), but that the sermons were written by more than one author at dates ranging from the twelfth century to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and later (Rano, 1987, Walsh, 1988-1990, Elm 2002, Saak, 2012). In the fourteenth century the collection was of importance in the debates between the Augustinian Hermits and the Augustinian Canons and in the efforts of the Augustinian Hermits to establish their priority as the oldest monastic or religious order (Walsh, 1998-1990, Saak, 2012). In fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the sermons, both in Latin and in vernacular translations, enjoyed tremendous popularity among all religious orders, who found there an emphasis on practical virtues. As Saak observed, this text "is not some quaint and curious oddity ..., but ... a major text influencing the religious life as such of late medieval and Renaissance Europe" (Saak, 2012, p. 82).

Different manuscripts of the collection include different numbers of sermons, from the first appearance in the mid-fourteenth century of a version that included 23 sermons, to the one containing 76 sermons that was edited by Erasmus in the early sixteenth century. Relationships among the manuscripts, the choice of sermons, and the number and order of the sermons

included remain to be investigated. The present manuscript is of interest in that it contains 37 numbered sermons, several of which are not found in Migne's edition.

The sermons survive, in whole or in part, in at least 424 extant manuscripts (Elm, 2002), and thirteen incunable editions (GW 2920, ISTC ia01308000; GW 2999-3008, ISTC ia0131100-ia01320000). The edition printed in Migne, which includes 76 sermons, was based on the 1685 edition published by the Maurists, which in turn was based in Erasmus's edition, Froben, 1528/9. The first printed edition to include all 76 sermons was Amerbach's of 1495.

f. 62v, *Temporibus Octaviani Caesaris cum ex universi mundi partibus hii qui pro senatu populloque preerant provinciis scriberunt . . . Publius Lentulus in Iudea preses senatui populloque Romano epistolam misit cuius verba sunt hec, incipit, "Aparuit temporibus nostris quod adhuc est homo magne virtutis cui nomen est christus yhesus . . . Illaris servata [?] gravitati// [incomplete, lacking the last few lines];*

Publius Lentulus, *Epistola de forma et statura Jesu Christi ad Senatum romanum*; see Von Dobschütz, 1899, pp. 308-310, listing 72 manuscripts; see also Mellor, Online Resources, adding two additional manuscripts; Stegmüller, 1950-1978, no. 158,1, and Bertalot, 1985-2004, vol. II, 1371.

This letter, which circulated widely in the later Middle Ages, purports to be by Publius Lentulus, the governor of Judaea before Pontius Pilate. In the letter, Lentulus describes the physical appearance of Christ to the Roman Senate. The letter is clearly fictitious; there was no Lentulus serving as governor of Judea at that time. The original letter may have been Greek, translated into Latin in the thirteenth century. It had wide currency in fifteenth-century Italy.

According to the table of contents on the front pastedown, the missing ff. 63-70 contained these texts: f. 63, *Oratio Sancti Petri martiris*; f. 67, *Sermo Sancti Augustini de nativitate*; f. 69, *Item de nativitate domini*; f. 71 [i.e., 70v], *Item de nativitate domini* [see following item].

f. 71, [beginning imperfectly], incipit, "///de patre sine matre, de matre sine patre . . . non formationis sed reformationis domini nostri yhesu christi qui cum patre et spiritui sancto vivit et regnat in seculla secullorum. Amen";

Described in table of contents as *Item [sermo] de nativitate domini*.

ff. 71v-72v, *Item Sermo Sancti Augustini de Nativitate domini*, incipit, "Hodie veritas de terra orta est, Christus de carne natus est. Gaudete solenpniter . . . In illo libertatem accipiamus qui propter nos de terra natus est. In illo collum poscideamus [sic] qui cum patre et spiritui sancto vivit et regnat in secula seculorum, Amen".

Augustine, *Sermones de tempore*, Sermo CXCII, *In Natali Domini*, IX, printed in Migne, PL, vol. 38, col. 1011-1013.

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Piccard Online

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

Sigrid Krämer. *Scriptores possessoresque codicum medii aevi [electronic resource]*, Augsburg, Dr. Erwin Rauner-Verlag, available by subscription

<http://webserver.erwin-rauner.de/#scriptores>

[Verona, the Church of Saint Anastasia](https://www.chieseeverona.it/en/our-churches/the-basilica-of-saint-anastasia)

<https://www.chieseeverona.it/en/our-churches/the-basilica-of-saint-anastasia>

Patrologia Latina: the Full Text Database (by subscription)

<http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/>

Library of Latin Texts, series A and B

<http://apps.brepolis.net/BrepolisPortal/default.aspx>

<https://about.brepolis.net/library-of-latin-texts/>

ISTC: Incunable Short Title Catalogue

<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/>

Lentulus, *Epistola de forma et statura Jesus Christi* (English translation)

[http://www.thenazareneway.com/likeness\\_of\\_our\\_saviour.htm](http://www.thenazareneway.com/likeness_of_our_saviour.htm)

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<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09154a.htm>

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<http://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/epistle-of-lentulus/>

Repertorium biblicum medii aevi (digital version of Stegmüller )

<http://repbib.uni-trier.de/cgi-bin/rebihome.tcl>

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