



Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae with an Introduction, Text, and Translation (Oxford Early Christian Texts)

Andrew Cain

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Jerome's Epitaph on Saint Paula (*Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*) is one of the most famous writings by one of the most prolific authors in all of Latin antiquity. Composed in 404, it is an elaborate eulogy commemorating the life of Paula (347-404), a wealthy Christian widow from Rome who renounced her senatorial status and embraced a lifestyle of ascetic self-discipline and voluntary poverty. She used her vast inherited fortune to fund various charitable causes and to co-found with Jerome, in 386, a monastic complex in Bethlehem which was equipped with a hostelry for Christian pilgrims.

The *Epitaphium* is one of the core primary texts on female spirituality (both real and idealized) in Late Antiquity, and it also is one of Jerome's crowning literary achievements, yet until now it has not received the depth of scholarly analysis that only a proper commentary can afford. This book presents the first full-scale commentary on this monumental work in any language. Cain accesses a very extensive array of ancient sources to fully contextualize the *Epitaphium* and he comprehensively addresses stylistic, literary, historical, topographical, theological, text-critical and other issues of interpretive interest, including relevant matters of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin philology. Considerable effort also is expended on extricating the elusive Paula of history from the sticky web of Jerome's idealized hagiographic construct of her. Accompanying the commentary is an introduction which situates the *Epitaphium* in the broader context of its author's life and work and exposes its various propagandistic dimensions. The critical Latin text and the facing-page translation will make the *Epitaphium* more accessible than ever before and will provide a reliable textual apparatus for future scholarship on this key Hieronymian writing.

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