

## 20 Prayerbook

Manuscript in German on paper with metalcuts.

Germany (Cologne?) and Tyrol, (Diocese of Brixen?), dated 1458.

138 x 94 mm, 221 leaves: f, II<sup>14</sup>, III<sup>16</sup>, IV<sup>18</sup>, V<sup>20</sup>, VI<sup>22</sup>, VII<sup>24</sup>, VIII<sup>26</sup>, IX<sup>28</sup>, X<sup>30</sup>, XI<sup>32</sup>, XII<sup>34</sup>, XIII<sup>36</sup>, XIV<sup>38</sup>, XV<sup>40</sup>, XVI<sup>42</sup>, XVII<sup>44</sup>, XVIII<sup>46</sup>, XIX<sup>48</sup>. Modern foliation in upper right margin in brown ink starting on fol. 2, later corrected in pencil as the older foliation skipped fol. 45, 'correct' ink foliation again from fol. 156 onwards. – Written space 97/117 x 65 mm, ruled for 20–25 lines per page. Written in several neat bastarda hands in reddish brown and red ink. Numerous initials and grotesques in brown, red and green, mostly one- to four-line initials, several figural and richly ornamented initials in at least two colours of six- to seventeen lines in height, with some marginal ornamentation in red, some drolleries. Includes 4 metalcuts of saints dated by Schreiber c. 1460, finished in contemporary colour. Entry of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century hand in brown ink on fol. 1v: "Dießes Büchlein ist abgeschrieben worden im Jahre. 1458 ist zu finden 162 (97)". – Right blank margin of fol. 31 closely cropped near text, but without loss; some repairs to clean tears in a few leaves; generally, for a popular devotional manuscript which has seen a fair amount of use, in very fine condition. The metalcuts, bound as a consecutive and apparently integral group into the last gathering, in an outstanding state of preservation. – Binding in contemporary style reusing contemporary material for the clasps. Housed in modern book box.

**PROVENANCE:** 1. Hartung and Karl, Munich, sale 14, 19–20 Nov. 1975, lot 8.

2. Private collection, Europe.

**TEXT:** Among the longer prayer cycles that the manuscript contains it is worth mentioning the layman's prayers for mass under the Brixen Bishop Ulrich Putsch (fol. 50–76), the Office of the Virgin (fol. 136–162), penitential psalms, the litany and vigil for the dead (fol. 162v–192), prayers on the Paternoster (fol. 206v–208), as well as suffrages. In between the prayers there are short prose texts, among them an exegesis of the Decalogue (fol. 23v–26), catalogues of virtues (fol. 219v–220v) and sins (fol. 89r/v) and of the Apostolicum (fol. 210r/v). Alongside these are spiritual meditations such as an exhortation (fol. 89v–90v) attributed to "pruder perchtolt" (Berthold von Regensburg), the "Sayings of twelve masters" (fol. 92v–97) and the exemplum of the dying pope and his chaplain (fol. 131–133). The manuscript is dated on fol. 98 and 162 ("Anno domini M.cccc.lviii"). The prayer cycle attributed to Bishop Ulrich II (1427–1437) points to an origin in the diocese of Brixen, corroborated by mentions of three local patron saints (Albuin, Ingenuin and Kassian).

**ILLUSTRATION:** fol. 214v: St Christopher (127 x 73 mm; Schreiber 2598a; early annotation at upper left) – fol. 215v: Madonna and Child (103 x 73 mm; Schreiber 2486; with nail heads in left corners, Annotations in an old hand on recto) – fol. 216: Holy Face (103 x 76 mm; Schreiber 2443; with nail heads at three corners; the right side and lower right hand corner is cropped where a fourth nail may have been present) – fol. 217: St Bernardino of Siena (127 x 72 mm; Schreiber 2568; with four nail heads in the corners).

The slender strip of grass and other plants at the bottom of the print of St Christopher helps distinguish it from Schreiber 2598. That metalcut (Paris, BN) is extremely similar, but is in fact a different print. This accounts for the discrepancy between the height of the BN (112 mm) and our impression. In the Holy Face Christ's eyes look to the right, the work's most significant deviation from Schreiber 2442 (Paris BN; Vienna; Munich). The Virgin and Child is a reversed, but "technically superior" copy of Schreiber 2487 (Colmar, Munich, Copenhagen) and preserved as a single leaf in Budapest (University Library) and Vienna (Albertina).

Metalcuts are one of the earliest and rarest media for printed illustrations, renowned for their beauty and delicacy. They were commonly used to embellish books, either integrated

into the text, or pasted down to decorate the interior of bindings. Multiple smaller images were sold on single sheets, but ensembles of larger prints without a central theme are rare. Unusually, the metalcuts at hand were printed, coloured, and sold as a group. Their arrangement in our manuscript provides the first absolute proof that these prints form a group. Three of the metalcuts have visible nail heads at their corners. As there is no sign of these marks on the other surviving impressions, our impressions must represent a slightly later state. The plates seem to have been fixed to a wooden bar, so as to print them on the same sheet of paper. This would explain their oblique imprint within the book. Stix attributes the Holy Face-cut to the Master of St George, who is believed to have been active in Cologne.

While single impressions survive in Budapest and in Munich (Schreiber 2486 and 2568), these prints appear together in only two other instances. One set of the Madonna and Child and Holy Face is in the Hofbibliothek in Vienna (Schreiber 2486 and 2443). A third metalcut (Schreiber 2568) was already in the Albertina in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is unclear whether these works came from the same manuscript. Schreiber noted a manuscript in Prague University Library (Ms.VI F6) that includes impressions of all four of our metalcuts. That volume's Latin text includes Czech glosses, suggesting a Bohemian origin, probably in Kloster Wittengau, but when the Prague impressions were coloured, some time earlier, it must have been in the same workshop as our metalcuts: the same colours have been used in almost identical locations. Like our manuscript, the Prague text does not engage directly with the images: their presence indicates the demand for German prints in export markets. The Prague metalcuts are pasted into the front and rear inside covers, with the Madonna opposite the Holy Face in the front cover, and the two saints at the back. Schreiber was not aware of our impressions, which appear to postdate the Prague group, due to the nail heads not present in earlier impressions. Our metalcuts represent one of the most complete and original sets of 15<sup>th</sup> century prints. Beyond their rarity, they acquire a greater art historical significance when viewed within their original historical contexts of workshop practice and the demands of the late medieval print buyer. With only some minor cropping of the pages, these impressions are the most complete that survive.

**LITERATURE:** The manuscript is hitherto unpublished.

Tobolka 1905; Stix 1920; Heitz 1926, vol. 15 and 62; Schreiber, vol. V and VIII; Deluga 2000.



cat. 20

**D**unferuchtes magen laß in der andacht  
 Wer das hier nach geschriben gepet  
 alltag spricht am gantzen jar der  
 Erlöst drey sellen aus dem fereferer  
 Und hat drey lauffent jar ablas so  
 drem pabste und so gnechten drey pat  
 noster dar zu



Giltiger  
 got stark  
 got untot  
 leicher got  
 parmer  
 ziger got  
 ich mit dich  
 durch de  
 inez dnu  
 allitigant  
 von durch

deine gottzeit maget christ von durch  
 all deine tugent und dach dem gunt  
 losse gute und demer parnung gar  
 und durch dan willen demer marter



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Catalogue 9

# Masterpieces

**Dr. Jörn Günther · Antiquariat, Hamburg**  
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