

NIKOLAUS VON DINKELSBÜHL, *Commentarius in Matthaeum* and *Quaestiones super Matthaeum* (Commentary and Questions on Matthew)

In Latin, manuscript on paper

Austria, c. 1427-1438

i + 495 + *i* leaves on paper, in folio, four watermarks present in the paper stocks: (a) a pair of the type Piccard, Ochsenkopf, VI 279 (1429-1436), alone in quires *i*-*ix*, *xvi*-*xvii*, *xxi*, *xxiv*-*xxxi* and *xxxviii*-*xliii*, mixed with (c) in quires *xix*-*xx* and *xxii*-*xxiii*, (b) a pair most similar to the types Piccard, Ochsenkopf, XI 117 + 118 (1430-36) and XI 132 + 133 (1432-34), in quires *x*-*xv*, (c) a pair of the type Piccard, Ochsenkopf, VI 257 (1419-36), in quires *xix*-*xx* and *xxii*-*xxiii*, always mixed with (a), (d) a pair of the type Piccard, Ochsenkopf, XIII 34 + 35 (1427-35), alone in quires *xxxii* and *xxxiv*-*xxxvii*, mixed with (a) in quire *xxxiii*, modern foliation in pencil, top, outer corner, collation, lacking at least six leaves (*i*⁸ [the product of modern restoration, in which ff. 1-5 are remnants, set into modern paper leaves] *ii*-*vi*¹² *vii*¹⁴ [f. 79 a singleton] *viii*-*xii*¹² *xiii*¹³ [f. 147^a a half-sized singleton] *xiv*¹² *xv*¹⁴ [wants 1 leaf after f. 174, with loss of text] *xvi*¹⁴ [wants 1 leaf before f. 175, with loss of text] *xvii*⁹ [wants 3 leaves before f. 187, with loss of text] *xix*-*xxii*¹² *xxiii*¹⁰ *xxiv*-*xxviii*¹² *xxix*¹⁰ + *xxx*¹⁴ [singleton indeterminable] *xxxi*-*xxxii*¹² *xxxiii*¹⁴ [f. 373 a singleton] *xxxiv*¹⁴ [wants 1 leaf after f. 386, cancelled with no loss of text] *xxxv*¹⁴ [wants 1 leaf before f. 393, with loss of text] *xxxvi*-*xxxvii*¹² *xxxviii*¹⁴ [singleton indeterminable] *xxxix*¹² *xl*¹⁴ [singleton indeterminable] *xli*-*xliii*¹²), copied by two hands, both forms of the semi-hybrida libraria, the first (ff. 1-264) more rapid than the second (ff. 266-495), routinely on 38-40 lines in two columns of c. 65-70 mm. in width, outline frames ruled only, red rubrics, 3- to 4- line red initials, ff. 264v-265v, 386v-392v and 495v blank, ff. 1-5, 118, 148, 150, 152, 186, 210, 248 and 489 partly or largely torn away or damaged, most subsequently restored. Bound in blind-stamped and tooled white alum-tawed skin over thick card boards, 20th-century work re-using the outer skin of an earlier seventeenth-century binding (see below, Provenance), with green fabric ties, sewn on four cords, without endbands, modern paper pastedowns. Dimensions 295 x 220 mm.

The unusual text in this manuscript, which pairs a commentary on the Gospel of Matthew with scholastic *quaestiones* (questions) on the same text, is unedited and largely unstudied. It is by the influential theologian Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl (d. 1433), who led a distinguished career not only at the University of Vienna, but in the service of Duke Albrecht of Austria. The text is rare on the market (only one sale, from 1972, recorded in the Schoenberg Database). This early copy of the text is securely localized to the Benedictine Abbey of Altenberg in Austria.

PROVENANCE

1. Copied in Austria c. 1427-1438 as supported by the evidence of the script and watermark. The watermarks present in the paper stocks indicate a date of production for the manuscript, conservatively, in the period c. 1427-38, assuming paper to be used within two to three years of its production, and most likely in the early to mid-1430s.

By the seventeenth century the manuscript was certainly owned by the Benedictine Abbey of Altenberg in Austria, but it was likely in their library as early as the fifteenth century. The blind-stamped white alum-tawed skin re-used in the restored binding reveals, in the central roundel, the figure of a saintly abbot (a tonsured figure with halo holding a crozier). This is the work of Ludwig Conradt in Vienna, who was contracted

in 1678 to rebind the entire library of the Benedictine abbey of Altenburg near Horn in Lower Austria. The abbot represented in the central roundel is St Lambert of Maastricht, the founder of Altenburg. (For an example of an Altenburg binding of 1678, see Online Resources below; on the rebinding itself, see Schweighofer, 1958, pp. 119-20).

The manuscript's production post-dates the devastation that Altenburg suffered from Hussite attacks in 1427 and 1430, which also marked the end of a period of active book production in Altenburg itself (see Schweighofer, 1958, pp. 113-116). The books from the Altenburg library dating to the mid- to late fifteenth century were, to judge by surviving colophons, much more frequently copied by individuals external to the abbey than produced within it. These were books either purchased by the abbey or donated by former students of the University of Vienna (see Schweighofer, 1958, p. 118). Given that broader context and the particular academic content of this manuscript, it is probable that it was not first copied at Altenburg, but acquired in the course of the fifteenth century, perhaps by donation.

2. In comparison with the records pertinent to the seventeenth-century rebinding exercise and an inventory of the library from 1924, some 37 paper manuscripts in 49 volumes, or 17% of the total stock of paper manuscripts rebound in 1678, are no longer in the abbey collection (see Schweighofer, 1958, p. 123). These losses, for the most part, took place during and after the Second World War. In 1945-1946 the abbey was occupied by Soviet troops, who used the library as a theatre and removed many of the books; a large collection was found only some years later in a greenhouse on a nearby farm (see Mittendorfer in Online Resources below). The present manuscript is the second in a two-volume set, and the first volume remains in Altenburg.
3. The manuscript has suffered considerable losses of leaves, often at the beginning and end of quires, and some remaining leaves in those positions are extremely dirty. This pattern of damage suggests that the book had fallen into a state of severe disrepair, with the quires detached from the binding, prior to the twentieth-century restoration of the manuscript. Re-stretching the white skin cover over card boards of insufficient strength to withstand the resultant tension has caused the boards to bend away from the book-block. A note in an earlier sale description, kept alongside the manuscript, records that the manuscript was found pressed under a heavy weight – perhaps in an attempt to flatten the boards – on a cupboard shelf in a stable. The heirs to the property, described only loosely as being in “southern Lower Saxony or northern Hessen,” had no knowledge of how its prior owner had come by it.

TEXT

ff. 1-386, (ff. 1-5 fragmentary; f. 6, beginning mid-way through c. 8), incipit, “///nostrum Ad hoc autem non fuisset ydoneus nisi naturam defectibilem ... [f. 12, c. 9] ET ascendens in nauculam transfretauit et venit in ciuitatem suam ... [Mt 9, 1-2]. In precedenti capitulo posita sunt quidam miracula ... [c. 28, f. 385v] ... sunt in eternum mansura quorum bonorum nos participes efficiat Jesus christus dominus noster qui cum patre et sancto spiritu uiuit et regnat vnus deus in secula benedictus”; [f. 385v, Postscript], incipit, “In superioribus sepe facta est mencio de quodam Judeo religionis christiane penitus ignaro qui in quodam libello suo conatus est ... Sic

ergo postquam ad dictum christianorum de christi incarceratione non sequitur contradictio seu aliud inconueniens ut Judeus voluit inferre et c."; [ff. 386v-392v, blank];

Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl, *Commentarius in Matthaeum*, c. 8-28; unedited; Stegmüller Online, no. 5710 (without the postscript). The postscript discussing the Incarnation and directed against "the short treatise" (*libello*) "of a certain Jew" (*quodam Judeo*) is in the autograph, and Alois Madre (1965, p. 54) regarded it as integral to the work, although he did not note how many other manuscripts of Nikolaus's commentary on Matthew have it as well.

Amongst the most significant theological works of the Vienna theologian Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl, his commentary on Matthew combined scriptural exegesis with occasional scholastic *quaestiones* dealing with matters of moral theology, pastoral issues, and contemporary dogmatic debate. It is thought to be the product of three phases of work during Nikolaus's long career: first, during his tenure as *cursor biblicus* in 1397-98, when he had to lecture on a book of the New Testament, and chose or was assigned Matthew; second, in his early years as a Master of Theology, in 1412-14; third, in the years of intensive scholarly and literary activity following the Council of Konstanz, through to c.1425, while he was resident in the Benedictine abbey of Melk (Madre, 1965, pp. 60-62).

Nikolaus's own autograph survives still in the same institution to which he left it upon his death in 1433 (Melk, Benediktinerstift, Cod. 504, ff. 1-263r); around a dozen further manuscripts of the complete work are known (Madre, 1965, pp. 52-55). The present copy is very early, perhaps even written during the author's lifetime. The work was frequently copied in two-volume sets, and this present manuscript is the second volume of just such a set. Although there has been damage to its start, the manuscript volume only ever began at c. 8; its second half contains exactly that portion of Nikolaus's *Quaestiones in Matthaeum* pertinent to c. 8-28 of the *Commentarius*. This form of dividing the *Commentarius* and *Quaestiones* between two volumes is very unusual (more common was to copy the works in two or three volumes with the entire *Commentarius* followed by the entire *Quaestiones*). There is just one other manuscript with the same pattern of division. It is the first volume of a set, with c. 1-7 of the *Commentarius* and the pertinent *Quaestiones* to c. 1-7 (qq. 1-30), namely Altenburg, Benediktinerstift, AB 14 C 15. The present manuscript is almost certainly its original companion.

ff. 393-495, incipit, [beginning mid-way through q. 31] "//de diuicijs in quantum bonum vtile et non delectabile bonum ...; [f. 395v, q. 32], Utrum sint solum septem dona spiritus sancti. Sine argumentis respondetur ... [q. 56] Alio modo potest intelligi predicacio ewangelij in vniuerso orbe cum pleno effectu ... Sed hoc facto veniet consummatio mundi. Et sic est finis et c."; [f. 495v, blank].

Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl, *Quaestiones super Matthaeum*, ad c. 8-28 (qq. 31-56); unedited; Stegmüller Online, no. 5711. As a companion text to his commentary on Matthew, which itself contained scholastic *quaestiones*, Nikolaus produced a separate work in which he treated a long series of theological issues arising from Matthew's Gospel in the form of scholastic *quaestiones*. The composition of the *Quaestiones* is thought to have followed the same chronology as the *Commentarius*; one *quaestio* (q. 26) is known to have been written in 1425 and repeats material from Nikolaus's *consilium* delivered during the council of Konstanz against the Dominican friar Johannes Falkenberg. An autograph copy of the *Quaestiones* survives, in the same manuscript as

that of the *Commentarius* (Melk, Benediktinerstift, Cod. 504, ff. 265r-382r); around ten further manuscripts are known with the complete work (see Madre, 1965, pp. 55-60).

The unusual combination of scriptural exegesis and scholastic *quaestiones* in the treatment of one text, Matthew's Gospel, reflects the biographical circumstances of the author. Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl was equally committed to the scholarly enterprise of the University of Vienna as he was to pastoral preaching and monastic reform; he had long-standing personal associations with the great abbey of Melk, the driving force in central Europe in the fifteenth-century Benedictine reform. (For Nikolaus's biography, see Madre, 1965, pp. 7-43). The first half of the fifteenth century saw the production of some truly enormous biblical commentaries by lecturers at the University of Vienna. This was a product of its distinctive institutional emphasis on offering cursory lectures (in the sense of 'comprehensive courses') on individual books of the Bible. Doctors of Theology, like Nikolaus, continued to lecture on individual books of the Bible, now at a much greater depth, until they died. At the same time, lecturers were also expected to engage in a culture of debate and disputation with their peers. This explains the tendency for these commentaries to include scholastic *quaestiones*. In the case of Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl, this principle was extended to his writing of the *Quaestiones super Matthaeum* as an independent work. (See Courtenay, 2015, pp. 272-274 and 282; on the culture of biblical exegesis at Vienna in the fifteenth century more broadly, see Courtenay, 2012, pp. 573-77.)

LITERATURE

Courtenay, William J. "The Bible in Medieval Universities," in Richard Marsden and E. Ann Matter, eds., *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, *From 600 to 1450*, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 555-578.

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Madre, Alois. *Nikolaus von Dinkelsbühl. Leben und Schriften. Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Literaturgeschichte, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters* 40/4, Münster, 1965.

Schweighofer, Gregor. "Die Altenburger Klosterbibliothek," *Biblos. Österreichische Zeitschrift für Buch- und Bibliothekswesen, Dokumentation, Bibliographie und Bibliophilie* 7 (1958), pp. 110-23.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Bibliografie Benediktiner Altenburg

<http://www.armarium.eu/startseite/niederoesterreich/benediktiner-altenburg-osb/bibliografie-benediktiner-altenburg-osb/>

Incunable with 1678 Altenburg binding

<https://www.ketterer-rarebooks.de/kunst/kd/details.php?obnr=418001250&anummer=491&detail=1>

Klaus Graf: identification of the 1678 Altenburg binding

<https://archivalia.hypotheses.org/103368>

Melk, Benediktinerstift, Cod. 504

https://manuscripta.at/hs_detail.php?ID=40378

Mittendorfer, Konstanze: Bibliothek des Benediktinerstiftes Altenburg. Fabian-Handbuch

[http://fabian.sub.uni-goettingen.de/fabian?Benediktinerkloster_\(Altenburg\)](http://fabian.sub.uni-goettingen.de/fabian?Benediktinerkloster_(Altenburg))

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