THE BAMBERG PRINTS OF “DER ACKERMANN AUS BÖHME”

John Clifton-Everest

The immense popularity of “Der Ackermann aus Böhmen” between c. 1450 and c. 1550 in Germany, attested by the number of manuscripts and especially the early printed versions, poses the question as to what practical use justified so much effort put into its reproduction. Such an enquiry leads inevitably to the so-called “Pfister” press in Bamberg, where it was first printed, and then quickly printed again, in the 1460s and 1470s. Research in recent times, which confirmed the origins of the early 36-line Bible at the same printery and further established a reliable date for one of those Ackermann incunables, has cast new light on the question. It seems clear that along with a small group of other German-language texts the Ackermann was printed on a press under episcopal control, specifically for pastoral use by the clerics of the Bamberg bishopric. All early printeries were largely dependent on the needs of the church to remain viable. The rapid subsequent appearance of Ackermann prints elsewhere must result from the success of those two Bamberg prints. Presumably the work served in effect as a German “Ars Moriendi,” a use which can help to explain the apparent corruption of the surviving text.

“CHARLES IV – EMPEROR BY THE GRACE OF GOD.”
RECENT RESEARCH ON COURTLY ARTS IN THE LUXEMBURG DYNASTY

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In the framework of an exhibition presented in New York and Prague during 2005/2006, a catalogue was published under the title “Charles IV – Emperor by the Grace of God”. It assembles contributions dealing with various aspects of courtly arts during the tenure, in the Holy Roman Empire, of the Luxemburg dynasty (14th and early 15th centuries). The subjects covered are the lines of communication and transfer of art and architecture throughout central Europe, but also the relationship between the arts community and those in power. The volume constitutes a comprehensive survey of the arts in late medieval Central Europe, and calling it a central point of departure for further research into the individual topics represented as well as for further work on better defining and differentiating the concept of courtly arts, is entirely justified. The present article highlights individual contributions of the catalogue and places them in the context of the scholarly debates of the most recent decades.