



## ON CONCERNING THE BEGINNING OF PRINTING IN 15TH-CENTURY STRASSBURG.

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ON THE OCCASION OF THE 550TH YEAR CELEBRATION OF THE INVENTION OF PRINTING, THE AUTHOR HAS TRIED TO FIND NEW ARGUMENTS CONCERNING TIME AND PLACE. GUTENBERG COULD NOT HAVE MADE HIS INVENTION IN MAINZ IN 1440, AS IS WIDELY MAINTAINED, BECAUSE HE LIVED DEMONSTRABLY IN STRASSBURG FROM 1434 TO 1444. HERE, IN 1439 THERE WAS A LARGE LAWSUIT IN WHOSE RECORDS IS NOTED THAT GUTENBERG, AS THE HEAD OF A GROUP, HAD WORKED

ON "AVENTUR UND KUNST." THIS TERM WAS QUITE LIKELY THE FIRST COVER-UP DESIGNATION FOR THE FIRST PRINTING. ADDITIONAL HISTORIC EVIDENCE AND POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS LEAD TO THE CONVICTION THAT THE FIRST RESULTS OF PRINTING TOOK PLACE IN STRASSBURG AROUND 1440, THAT, HOWEVER, THE MASTER BROUGHT THE INVENTION TO PERFECTION IN THE 42-LINE BIBLE THAT HE PRINTED AFTER HIS RETURN TO HIS BIRTHPLACE, MAINZ.

WHENEVER the question comes up concerning when and where Gutenberg invented the art of printing, the discussion turns homeric with a maze of conflicting opinions and an uncertain source situation. There are reasons to reconsider the question and to judge whether any new arguments for or against the date and location of Gutenberg's invention have been found. The general notion that Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing art in Mainz, in 1440, persists. But something in this contention is false, because Gutenberg resided in Strassburg from March 14, 1434 to March 12, 1444. This is proved through fifteenth-century documents; he could not, therefore, have worked out his invention in Mainz in the middle of the Strassburg period. Either the place of invention must be moved to Strassburg or the date must be moved at least eight years ahead, for only in 1448 did Gutenberg return to his native city. Centennial celebrations have taken place in 1540, 1640, 1740, 1840 and 1940, but it is possible that the celebrants were mistaken. How did the plainly unscientific notion that printing was invented in Mainz in 1440 happen? After a bit of search, I found a possible hint in Dietmar Debes' interesting book, *Gepriessenes Andenken von Erfindung der Buchdruckery* (Praiseworthy Memory of the Invention of Bookprinting).<sup>1</sup> Here there is a reference to a 1643 manual, *Orthotypographia*, by a Leipzig proofreader named Hornschuch; to which a sermon by doctor of theology, Daniel Kramer, was added, who bases the invention on the Bible, but also gives some traditional information. He cites the Italian historians, Polydorus Vergilius and Antonius Sabellicus, who report about Johannes Gutenberg's 1440 invention in Mainz. This might be the source and the incentive for the Leipzig

printer's journey to Wittenberg in 1540 and there, under the chairmanship of the Luther printer, Hans Lufft, to honor the inventor and his art. The following centennials repeated this tradition. Other evidence is contradictory; scientific clarity is not to be found in the earliest sources. In the compilation issued by Hans Widmann, concerning the current state of Gutenberg research, Alfred Swierk<sup>2</sup> has put together the evidence up to 1507 in which the name of Gutenberg is given as the inventor. He found twenty-one sources, but in only six were the place and date given:

- 1** Jacob Wimpheling, already cited by Daniel Kramer, must be named as a witness. He wrote his 1505 *Epithoma Germanorum*: "In the year 1440 there was a great and almost godly benefit given to the entire earth, by Johannes Gutenberg, a Strassburger, with his invention of a new way to write. For he was the first to invent the printing art in the city of Strassburg; afterward he went to Mainz and continued it successfully."
- 2** In a catalog of the Strassburg bishops in 1508, Wimpheling repeats that the printing art was invented by a Strassburger, who, under the direction of a certain Johannes Gensfleisch completed it in Mainz.
- 3** Matteo Palmiero reported in his 1483 chronicle: the noble Johannes Gutenberg zum Jungen invented book printing in 1440 in Mainz.
- 4** Probably the most important evidence is in the 1499 *Chronicle of the City of Cologne*. There we read that the ingenious art was invented in Mainz on the Rhine in 1440 and so improved by 1450 that in this golden year was begun the printing of a Bible in Latin. The first inventor was a nobleman, "Johan Gudenburch," born in Strassburg and a citizen of Mainz. The first preparatory work of this art, however, took place in Holland, where someone had already printed the Latin Donatus. The reporter of this notice was presumably Ulrich Zell, the first printer in Cologne, who possibly knew Gutenberg personally and may even have worked with him.
- 5** Baptista Fulgosus wrote in 1494: Gutenberg of Strassburg has surpassed by the invention of book printing all previous accomplishments in the mechanized arts.

**6** In the 1509 *Sponheimer Chronicle* of Johannes Trithemius, it is recorded that Johannes Gutenberg invented the art of printing in Mainz and completed it with the advice and help of Johannes Fust and others.

THE other fifteen reports and songs of praise testify basically that Gutenberg was the inventor. Of the five sources that present an opinion about the time of the invention, the year is uniformly given as 1440. This seems remarkable. But concerning the place of invention, three sources give Mainz and only two speak for Strassburg; we know already that Gutenberg resided in Strassburg in the year of invention. That Gutenberg printed in Mainz from 1449 or 1450 is proved by contracts and records. The lever for further research must, therefore, be applied first to the Strassburg time. What was there about that “Aventur und Kunst” (Adventure and Art) that was spoken of in the large Strassburg lawsuit of 1439?<sup>3</sup> The goldsmith, Hans Dünne, gave witness that he had earned over 100 gulden from Gutenberg for work that had to do with printing. Then, there was the information that the cabinetmaker, Anton Saspach, had built the press. Further, we learn that Gutenberg sent his servant to the home of the deceased, Andreas Dritzehn, to undo two screws so that the four pieces that were in the press would fall apart; one would not be able to see what it was. At Christmas, 1438, Gutenberg took back forms from his business associates and had them melted down. “Implements and finished work” were mentioned, also “forms and all sorts of tools, lead and whatever else belonged.” All this is characteristic and indicative that the secretive “Aventur und Kunst,” about which Gutenberg spoke during the hearings, really had to do with the printing of books; and that there already had been business successes—for without such success, the surviving brothers Jörg and Claus Dritzehn, would not have tried so intensively to get into the company in place of their deceased brother Andreas.

IN THE Strassburg city archives, an official document dated 1446 was found, that deals once again with the events of December, 1436:

“Item, Jörg Dritzehn demanded what his brother Claus had taken to himself after the death of their brother Andreas in unshared property, namely thirty and a half pounds of pennies, as well as precious small things, large and small books, etc.”

**W**HAT were these large and small books that Jörg Dritzehn was arguing about with his brother? Were they part of the results of the “Aventur und Kunst”? Claus Dritzehn, for his part, demanded that his brother give some account of what he had secretly taken for himself, namely, besides valuable utensils, the “Snytzel-Gezug” and the press that had been at Andreas’ home.

**T**HE “Snytzel-Gezug” was possibly type; perhaps the small books had been printed on the press. The evidence accumulates, but there is no really definitive proof. Then the happenings in Avignon in 1444, where a certain Prokop Waldvogel taught an “ars artificialter,” an art of artificial writing, leads us to suspect that what Jörg stole was given a wider circulation for Waldvogel is said to have brought letters made of iron, pewter, brass and lead with him—things that possibly came from Strassburg and had to do with printing.

**H**OWEVER, there are objections to all this that must be mentioned and that point out that such trade terminology as “formen,” “gezuge,” “drucken,” etc., was used in other occupations, such as cloth printing, stamping, for title and ornament stamps in binding, etc. Lead and pewter had possibly been used for the earlier production of mirror frames—for the so-called “holy mirrors.” These suggestions must be kept in mind, but the dimensions of the Strassburg lawsuit, at which fourteen witnesses appeared for Gutenberg and twenty-two for Jörg Dritzehn, and where even the renowned banker, Friedel von Seckingen, took part, tell us that it concerned weightier things than the stamps on individual leather bindings.

**A**T ANY rate, the judgment of the high court of the city of Strassburg was in favor of Gutenberg and his business associates. Jörg Dritzehn was turned down, he was not admitted to the association, which all those taking part in the process, especially the suing brothers, looked upon as profitable. One can think of Martin Brechter, who later gave surety for Gutenberg, also Johann Mentelin of Schlettstadt, and the keeper of the bishop’s seals, the cleric Heinrich Eggestein; the latter two starting a press in 1458-59, during Gutenberg’s lifetime; both of whom obviously possessed the know-how to print books. The question still remains: what enterprise occupied Gutenberg after the lawsuit—from 1439 to 1444 in Strassburg?

I AM of the opinion that he worked step-by-step on the improvement of his invention. The “Aventur und Kunst” must have brought in revenues, since respected citizens gave them their confidence. After all, the pages of the oldest examples of the twelve editions of the 27-line Donatus were recovered out of bindings of Strassburg books.

OUT of this comes the assumption that the suspected Strassburg books concerned mostly the small but important schoolbook, the Latin grammar of Aelius Donatus. Before Gutenberg’s invention, it was almost always copied because, as a work book, it was subject to much wear and tear. The type of this little volume was the so-called Donat or Kalendar type, DK for short, a Gothic or Textura, whose peculiarities may not be investigated further here. It was clearly Gutenberg’s first type, with which he also printed later in Mainz. Gottfried Zedler gives us a conscientious scholarly examination of this DK type under the title, *Gutenberg’s Oldest Type and the Books Printed in It* (Mainz, 1934). In it the changes and improvements of this type are recorded in their historical sequence, but there are no definite, dated recognition signs. This type, improved in between, was used later in Mainz for calendars and other small jobs, for example, for the text of the Türkenkalendar, printed in 1454, and as the titling type for the 31-line Indulgence for Cyprus, 1454 and 1455. But, through typographic analysis, it has been proved that many editions of the Donatus were printed a good bit earlier.

IF A DATED piece of work in this type could be found, the question of when printing was done in Strassburg might possibly be answered. The first printing trials were apparently single pages, such as primers, Lord’s Prayer sheets and other prayers. After these, the printers took up the Donatus. Gottfried Zedler, the best authority on the problems of the DK type, found that the 27-line Donatus page preserved in Darmstadt was the oldest impression of this type yet found, followed by the Berlin-Heiligenstadt example a, the Berlin-Heiligenstadt copy b and finally, the 27-line Paris fragment (*see figure 1*). This sequence is pretty well certain; but when will there be dates?

IN 1898, under the leather binding of an old account book belonging to the university in Mainz, a 9 by 12.5 centimeter

cū docerem̄ docerū docerēt p̄rito p̄fco cū doct⁹ sim⁹ l fueri  
 sis l fuisset l fuit aplē cū docti sim⁹ l fuerim⁹ sitis l fueri-  
 ris sic l fuerit p̄rito p̄fco p̄fco cū doct⁹ esse l fuisse res ul  
 fuisse cēt l fuisset aplē cū docti eēm⁹ l fuisset⁹ eētis l fuissetis  
 eētis eētis l fuisset furo cū doct⁹ ero l fuerō eis l fuisset l fu-  
 rit aplē cū docti eīm⁹ l fuerim⁹ eētis l fueritis erit ul fuerit  
 Infructō nō sū nūis ⁊ p̄fcois tpe p̄nti ⁊ p̄rito ip̄fco docerē  
 p̄rito p̄fco ⁊ p̄fco p̄fco doctū ēē l fuisse furo doctū dei Duo  
 utidpla ihūē a obo passio p̄ntū ut doct⁹ fut⁹ ut docerē⁹  
 Ego legis legit aplē legim⁹ legitis legūt p̄rito ip̄  
 fco legabā legebas legebat aplē legebam⁹ legeba-  
 tis legebāt p̄rito p̄fco legi legisti legit ⁊ p̄t legim⁹ legi-  
 tis legentē ul legere p̄rito p̄fco p̄fco legentē legentē lege-  
 rat aplē legam⁹ legatis legentē futūo legam⁹ leges le-  
 get aplē legemus legentis legentē Inp̄tatio modo tēpōe  
 p̄nti ad secundā ⁊ terciā p̄ntam lege legat aplē lega-  
 mus legite legant futūo legito tu legito ille aplē lega-  
 mus legitote legunto ul leguntote Optatio modo tē  
 pōe p̄nti ⁊ p̄rito ip̄fco ul legerem legeres legeerit eplē  
 ul legeremus legeretis legerent p̄rito p̄fco ⁊ p̄fco p̄fco  
 ul legissem legisset aplē ul legissemus legissetis  
 legissetis futūo ul legā legas legat aplē ul legamus le-  
 gatis legant ⁊ om̄nibus nō tēpōe p̄nti cū legam legas  
 legat aplē cū legam⁹ legatis legant p̄rito ip̄fco cū le-  
 gerē legeres legeret aplē cū legeremus legeretis legerent  
 p̄rito p̄fco cū legerem legeretis legerit aplē cū legerim⁹  
 legeritis legerint p̄rito p̄fco p̄fco cū legissem

Figure 1. Fragment from the Paris Donatus.

page, printed on both sides with the oldest Gutenberg type was found. It was immediately apparent that this was a very early impression. Gottfried Zedler and Aloys Ruppel were immediately in agreement that it was one of the oldest impressions of the master to be found. Zedler placed it in time after the Darmstadt Donatus. The text, in German, deals with the last judgment, and the page was given the designation, "Fragment of the World Judgment." Later the little page was recognized as a part of a sibylline prophecy composed in Thuringia. The whole poem, consisting of 750 verses, is not, however, set in poetic style but is unjustified. One can estimate that the brochure had about twenty-eight pages. It was, therefore, similar in length to the first Donatus editions. From the fact that the capitals W, X, Y and Z are missing, it is clear that the type had been designed for printing in Latin. Why, however, did Gutenberg interrupt his Donatus production to print the Sibylline Legend?

**I**N MY judgment, the Gutenberg research in the past has thought too little about the motivation of the master for his life's work and about the sociological connections. One suspects that profit and ambition were his driving forces because one attributes to a pious man of the middle ages, the characteristics of the twentieth century. An ambitious inventor, however, would have put his name in the colophon for posterity as Johannes Fust and Peter Schöffer did later. And a promoter interested only in profit would not have put his personal income as well as all profit into the development of this new technique. Finally, the master was a poor man in his final years; he was dependent on the pension of his archbishop.

**W**HAT do we know about Gutenberg's motives? He was politically oriented and had grown up amid the rivalries between patricians and guilds in his birthplace. His years in Strassburg could be considered as asylum, a kind of forced emigration. Gutenberg was aware of his nationality, which should not be confused with a conservative viewpoint. He occupied himself with the printing of the *Türkenkalendat* and the *Türkenbulle* to help the planned expedition against the Turks. In the archbishop's quarrel, he, along with his supposed partner in printing the *Catholicon*, Dr. Konrad Humery, were supporters of the archbishop of Ysenburg, who wanted to establish greater independence from the pope.

IEDEN EN NULZE DO NIEN DO GOT ORREN WIL  
 GEBE SIE GENE MIT SCHRECKE DOBIEN DIE  
 GOT NIE ERKANTE NOCH FORCHTE EN NIEMAN  
 MAG SICH OBERGEBE NICHT DOR DE GOTLICHE  
 ANGESICHT KRISTUS WIL DO URTEL SPRECHEN.  
 UN WIL ALLE BOSSHEIT RECHEN DIE NIE GE-  
 DADEN WILLE SIN DEN WIL ER GEBE EWIGE  
 PIN UN WIL DEN GUTEN GEBE BYRM SCULDE  
 UN EWIG LEBE Sijt die werlt un alle ding  
 Die in o werlt geschaffe sint Ezu gne  
 un werde auch zu nicht als man wol

Figure 2.  
 Fragment of the  
 Sibyllene Legend,  
 Strassburg 1440-1444.

**G**UTENBERG was also a religious man, as this was clearly understood by a citizen of his time. However, during the period he was in Strassburg, the schism prevailed. The ashes of Jan Hus had awakened new heretical movements and reform efforts in Thuringia. At the Council of Basel, an anti-pope was elected; and the Roman pope declared the Council of Basel dissolved. However, the Council continued to meet. Within the Catholic Church there were two factions: the supporters of the Roman pope and the supporters of the Council. The papal party wanted the unconditional priority claims of the Roman pope fulfilled. The Council supporters, who were backed by the nationalistic lower nobility, demanded a reform of the church, of the service, and the right of the clergy to have a say in the election of bishops and archbishops. The city fathers of Strassburg had decided to support the politics of the Council.

**I**N THESE disturbed times, the Hapsburg, Friedrich III, was elected as the German king on February 2, 1440, in Frankfurt am Main. Nicholas of Cues had supported the election of Friedrich at the behest of the Roman pope. I have written about my conjectures that Nicholas of Cues and Johannes Gutenberg knew each other since their early years and were actually good friends.<sup>4</sup> Cues, in his “De Concordantia Catholica” had, along with other reform suggestions, demanded a missal reform with error-free and identical copies of the newly edited missals; and

at least one person understood that concern of the future cardinal. It is altogether possible and even believable that the two met often in Strassburg during the many journeys that Nicholas made from Rome to Germany, and that Gutenberg knew of the preparations for the king's election and had been inspired to print the sibylline prophecy (*see figure 2*).

ALSO, the majority of the German people had great expectations of the successful candidate. King Friedrich III, later the emperor, had it in his power to keep the peace, to further the reform of the state and church, and to ward off the Turkish threat. What, then, had the election of Friedrich III to do with the printing of the sibylline prophecy?

IT WAS the late Soviet scholar, Natalja Warbanez,<sup>5</sup> who again indicated a connection, for Gottfried Zedler had discovered earlier that the Kaiser Friedrich Legend was woven into the text of the sibylline prophecy. Zedler wrote,

"The Gutenberg booklet is an indication that Gutenberg was close to the life of the people and knew how to satisfy the interests of the majority."

IN THIS booklet, in the DK type, the Sibylle presaged a return of Kaiser Friedrich who, according to folk belief, was locked into the Kyffhäuser mountain. Then Friedrich would unite the Christian people, retake the Holy Land, and provide justice and peace. Zedler felt that Gutenberg had speculated on a sure profit for the Sibyllenbuch, but I would say that a political or a religious motivation is just as likely. Natalja Warbanez thought that there might have been the purpose of disseminating heretical ideas—with which I cannot agree. However, she points out that the text had been compiled by the secret flagellant, Konrad Schmidt, who was burned at the stake with six of his companions in 1369 in Nordhausen. I don't believe that Gutenberg had any notion that the author might have been a heretic, but looked upon the prophecy as a legend or a folk tale. In any case, the Kaiser Friedrich expectation fell together with the newly elected king and prospective kaiser in the eyes of the people. And it is close to certainty that this was the reason Gutenberg interrupted his production of the Donatus to print the Sibyllenbuch.

**K**ING Friedrich, however, disappointed his political backers. He didn't bother himself about the affairs of empire and was nicknamed the "Sleepyhead of the Empire." His government was a reversal for the cities and their aspirations, for he regarded them as property of the crown; and he damaged the empire in that he tried to use it for his dynastic, Hapsburg interests.

**T**HE expectations that had been aroused in 1440 with the election of Friedrich III, died off in Strassburg in autumn 1444 at the latest, when it became known that Friedrich had brought in the Armagnaken hordes against the free Swiss and against the Council at Basel. These wild bands terrorized Alsace. A later printing of the Sibyllene Legend would have been impossible from the standpoint of the Strassburg citizens; therefore, the publication must have taken place between 1440 and 1444. I believe that conclusion is pertinent and justified, although it is not shared by the Gutenberg Research in Mainz. Just because the printing of the Sibyllene Legend must have been preceded by the Donatus and other single-page publications, the invention must have taken place about 1440 in Strassburg.

**T**HE arguments against such a direct connection between the election of Friedrich III and the printing of the Sibyllene Legend point out that it appeared in variants in the fourteenth and in the first half of the fifteenth centuries dozens of times, in writing, and after the Gutenberg edition, in repeated printings, without any relation to the election of Friedrich III. All this is correct. For that reason I would like to present a few arguments for my thesis, which, it must be said, were presented by Gottfried Zedler and Natalja Warbanecz earlier.

**1** The Sibyllene Legend was the first printing in the German language. Since the DK type was clearly planned for the Latin language, there must have been a previously unknown actual event that provided the incentive for this printing.

**2** One cannot rule out that the Sibyllene Legend may not have been printed for the election but for the coronation of Friedrich III on the 17th of June, 1442. Any other actual event at that time is unknown. After the raids of the Armagnaken, who were called in by Friedrich, and had created terror in the

area from Basel to Mainz, it would not have been possible to print an expectation of the Kaiser Friedrich text for decades. The next such printing took place a half century later with a clearly altered text.

**3** The printing of the Sibyllene Legend must not be isolated from the historic environment nor from the population of Strassburg that was oriented toward the Council of Basel. I suspect that this printing could not have taken place in Mainz, under the eyes of the inquisition, because of its heretical content in this reading.

HOW does the invention of printing look from the Mainz point of view? Gutenberg, who was last mentioned in Strassburg in connection with the levy against the Armagnacs, could hardly have gone back to Mainz before 1448. This was a period in which the council of the guilds proceeded drastically against his patrician friends. At some point in 1448, during the year of the city's bankruptcy and the end of guild dominance, Gutenberg returned to his native city. On the 17th of October, he received a loan of 150 gulden that his brother-in-law, Arnold Gelthus, had arranged for him. He clearly needed capital for the installation of a press in the Gutenberghof where his brother-in-law and supporter, Claus Vitzthum, lived. Claus Vitzthum and Arnold Gelthus were convinced of Gutenberg's credit-worthiness. Evidence to support their conviction probably consisted of finished books, especially the *Donatus*; the type mold, as well as punches, matrices and the DK type. According to the Cologne Chronicle, 1450 was the "golden year" in which the printing of the Latin Bible was begun. The experienced merchant, Johannes Fust, the money lender for the "work of books" and Bible printing, had no doubt been convinced of the practical value of the invention in 1449. Evidence to support investment could only have been brought from Strassburg as finished books—perhaps there were even some small items produced in the Gutenberghof.

IT IS absolute idiocy to suggest that Gutenberg's first work was the 42-line Bible (*see figure 3*), one of the most beautiful productions in the history of printing. The Bible was decidedly not Gutenberg's first book. It must have been preceded by many

egipti de manu ymaheditay: a q̄bz  
p̄duus erat. fuitq; dñs cū eo: et erat  
uir i cūdis prope agens. Habitauitq;  
in domo dñi sui: qui optime nouerat  
dñm esse cū eo: et oīa que gereret ab eo  
dirigi i manu illi. In uenitq; ioseph  
graciā coram dño suo: et ministrabat  
ei. A quo p̄positus omnibz gubernaba-  
bat credita sibi domū: et uniuersa que  
ei tradita fuerāt. Benedixitq; dñs do-  
mū egipti p̄pter ioseph: et multiplicauit  
uir tam i edibus q̄ in agris cundam  
eī substantiā. Nec quicq; aliud noue-  
rat: nisi panē quo uerebat. Erat autē  
ioseph pulcra facie: et decorus aspectu.  
Post multos itaq; dies - iniecit dña  
oculos suos in ioseph: et ait. Domni  
mecū. Qui nequaquā acquiescens op̄ri  
nepharico: dixit ad eā. Ecce dñs meus  
omnibz michi traditus: ignorat q̄d  
habeat in domo sua: nec quicq; e q̄d  
non sit in mea potestate: uel nō tradi-  
derit michi: preter te que uxor eius es.  
Quō ergo possū hęc malū facē: et pecca-  
re i dñm meū? Qui uiscerumodi uōbis per  
singulos dies loquebat: et mulier mo-  
lestā erat adolescenti: et ille recusabat  
stuprū. Accidit autē quadā die ut in-  
traret ioseph domū: et op̄cis quippiā  
absq; arbitris faceret: et illa apphēda  
lacrima uestimenti eius dicit. Domni  
mecū. Qui relido i manu eius pallio:  
fugit: et egressus ē foras. Cūq; uidisset  
mulier uestem in manibz suis: et se esse  
detemptam: uocauit ad se hoīes domi  
hebreū: ut illuderet nobis. Ingressus  
est ad me: ut uideret meū. Cūq; ego  
succlamassem: et audisset uocem meā:  
reliquit palliū q̄d tenebam: et fugit fo-  
ras. In argumentū ergo fidei: reuētū  
palliū ostendit marito reuētū domū:

et ait. Ingressus ē ad me seru⁹ hebreū.  
quē adduxisti: ut illuderet michi. Cūq;  
audisset me clamare: reliquit palliū  
q̄d tenebam: et fugit foras. Mijs auditi-  
tis dñs: et nimii credulus uerbis con-  
iugis: iratus est ualde: et dididitq; io-  
seph in carcerem ubi uindi regis custo-  
debant: et erat ibi clausus. Fuit autē  
dñs cū ioseph et miseratus est illi: et de-  
dit ei gratiā in cōsp̄ctu principis car-  
ceris. Qui tradidit in manu illi⁹ uni-  
uersos uindos qui i custodia tenebāt:  
et quid q̄d scibat: sub ip̄o erat: nec no-  
uerat aliquid: cūdis ei creditis. Dñs  
enī erat cū illo: et oīa op̄a ei⁹ dirigebat.

**N**ijs itaq; gestis: accidit ut  
peccatū duo eunuchi: p̄ncerna  
regis egipti et pistoz: dño suo. Iratū  
q; contra eos pharao: nam aler pin-  
ceris p̄ccar: aler pistozis: misit eos  
in carcerem principis militū: in quo  
erat uindus et ioseph. Et custos carce-  
ris tradidit eos ioseph: q̄ et ministra-  
bat eis. Aliquātū t̄pis fluxerat: et illi  
in custodia tenebant. Viderūtq; ambo  
somnia nocte una: iuxta interpretatio-  
nem congruā sibi. Ad quos cū intro-  
isset ioseph mane: et uidisset eos cūste:  
salsitrat⁹ ē dicens. Sur tristior ē hodie  
solito facies uestra? Qui respondit.  
Somnia uidi⁹: et non est qui inter-  
pretur nobis. Dixitq; ad eos ioseph.  
Nūquid nō dei ē interpretatio? Resere  
michi quid uideritis. Narrauit prior  
p̄positus p̄ncernay: somniū suū. Vi-  
debam coram me uitem in qua erant  
tres pagines resere paulatim i gam-  
mas: et post flores uuas maturecere:  
calicemq; pharaonis in manu mea.  
Tuli ergo uuas et repressi i calicem quē  
tenebam: et tradidi poculū pharaoni.  
Respondit ioseph. Hęc est interpretatio

experiments, failures, trials, small books; the accumulation of experience and the training of craftsmen. Such experience and separate inventions could not possibly have been assembled in the few years after his return to his home city. Finished, small books, beyond all the Donatus editions, must have been already produced in Strassburg.

**D**ESPITE all this, Gutenberg researchers doubt the early date for the invention. Aloys Ruppel wrote in the *Festschrift für A. Kolb*<sup>6</sup> in 1969: “. . . one may conclude that the Strassburg printing trials had not produced usable results.” And in the foundation document of the Mainz Gutenberg University, that was publicly read on May 22, 1946, he wrote, “Five hundred years ago in Mainz an historic event took place. The highly gifted son of our city, Johannes Gutenberg, invented the art of printing in 1446, which from Mainz started its conquering journey throughout the world.” (The citation is taken from Friedrich Schütz, 1982, *Aloys Ruppel*. Mainz, 102.) However, Ruppel, in his foundation document was silent about the fact that Gutenberg was not in Mainz in 1446, at least no proof was available to support his presence there. Is it not possible that pro-Mainz motives play a role here? The French historian, François Ritter, does not go along with the formula that the art of printing may have been conceived in Strassburg but was revealed to the world first in Mainz.<sup>7</sup> He names Gutenberg, in his 1955 *History of Alsatian Book Printing*, as the first printer in Strassburg; he believes, also, that Gutenberg remained in Strassburg after 1444 and that the Sibyllenbuch was printed in 1446. However, when one considers the Armagnaken terror and the vanished respect for Friedrich III, the printing date for the Sibyllene Legend must be set earlier.

TO SUM UP:

- 1** In the historical sources the date of 1440 is uniformly given for the invention of printing. The place is given three times as Mainz and twice as Strassburg.
- 2** The testimony of the witnesses at the Strassburg trial of 1439 lead one to suspect that the “Aventur und Kunst” refers to well developed basic printing operations or already successful printing.

3 The printing of the Sibyllene Legend is connected with the beginning of the reign of Friedrich III and, accordingly, must have taken place in 1440 or a few years later.

4 The printing of the superb 42-line Bible must have been preceded by small editions and by years of experiment. The credit-worthiness of the master, returning to his native city, could only have been established by his show of printed specimens out of the Strassburg period.

Thus, my conclusion: The indications contained in these four points show with greatest certainty that the invention of printing took place about the year 1440 in Strassburg, but this must be modified somewhat because exact proofs are not available. However, Mainz is the birthplace of the inventor and in Mainz the new art bore its most lovely fruits and from Mainz the book art reached out to conquer the world

## ENDNOTES

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2. Alfred Swierk. 1979. "Johannes Gutenberg als Erfinder in den Zeugnissen seiner Zeit." In *Der Gegenwärtige Stand der Gutenbergforschung*. 1972. Stuttgart: Hans Widman, 79.
3. Albert Kapr. 1988. *Johannes Gutenberg. Persönlichkeit und Leistung*. Leipzig: Urania-Verlag, 71.
4. Albert Kapr. 1972. "Gab es Beziehungen Zwischen Johannes Gutenberg und Nikolaus von Kues?" Mainz: *Gutenberg Yearbook*, 32.
5. Natalja Wassiljewna Warbanez. 1980. *Johannes Gutenberg und der Anfang des Buchdrucks in Europa*. (Johannes Gutenberg and the Beginning of Printing in Europe.) Moscow, (in Russian).
6. Aloys Ruppel. 1969. "Gutenberg in Strassburg und die Uranfänge der Buchdruckerkunst." In *Refugium Animae Bibliotheca*. Wiesbaden: Festschrift für Kolb, 451
7. François Ritter. 1955. *Histoire de l'Imprimerie Alsacienne aux XV et XVI Siecles*. Strassburg and Paris.

*Translated from German by Alexander Nesbitt.*

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