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Collation: * a-g(8), h(10)

THE WORLD UNFURLS IN “LITTLE BUNDLES OF TIME”

Fasciculus temporum.

Author
ROLEWINCK, Werner

Publication date
28th May, 1484.

Publisher
Erhardus Ratdolt,

Publication place
Venice,

Physical description
Small folio (298 by 194mm), 74 leaves, Gothic type, double-column, 55 woodcuts (including repeats), diagrams, white-vine intaglio woodcut initials; early twentieth century red morocco, elaborately decorated with an intricate design of multi-coloured onlays, gilt, preserved in a red morocco backed cloth slipcase and chemise.

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Dimensions

Notes
An attractive example, in a fine modern binding, of Werner Rolewinck's chronology 'Fasciculus temporum' – "Little bundles of time". First officially printed in 1474, the work presents both ecclesiastical and secular world history, from Genesis (in the year 5199BCE) to 1475, in the reign of Pope Sixtus IV, and with the story of Charles the Bold of Burgundy. Along the way, it includes note of events such as the invention of printing. His schema, was a series of linear charts, better suited to printing as a scroll rather than in book form, was so complicated that the first printer "who grappled with it botched the job" (Grafton).

It took a typographical genius, like Erhard Ratdolt, to invent a page design that could succinctly compare the relative importance of each historical episode with the great events of Christianity. He divided each page, which contained biblical and ecclesiastical history above, and secular history below, with a horizontal woodcut strip in which circles are inset containing the names and brief details (starting with Adam) of important characters from the Old Testament, popes, and saints. Immediately above the inset is the date of the event from the creation of the world, "anno mundi", which was determined to be 5199 BCE, and below the inset, printed upside down, the number of years before or after the birth of Christ.

While earlier editions contained diagrams, it was also Ratdolt who included a woodcut map of the world for the first time, with Jerusalem at its centre, and Palestine as a distinct region. A variation of the early "T-O" maps, numbers indicate the subdivisions of the three continents. Another significant woodcut, is that of Venice, only the second earliest printed depiction of Venice, in which the Doge's palace and gondolas can been seen clearly. The views of England, Jerusalem, and Rome, amongst others, are the earliest obtainable of these cities.

Just about all we know of Werner Rolewinck (1425–1502) appears in the entry for 1457 in his own compendium: "Et impresores librorum multiplicantur in terra…" (see leaf 64r). He was born in Westphalia in 1425, educated in Cologne where, in 1447, he entered the Carthusian monastery of St. Barbara in 1447 where he lived all his life. He may have authored more than fifty works, but the 'Fasciculus temporum', remains his best known.

'Fasciculus Temporum', was an instant success, an incunabula blockbuster, so popular that more than thirty editions were published over the next century, and greatly influenced Hartmann Schedel's 'Liber cronicarum' (1493), the now better known, Nuremberg Chronicle, which it preceded by two whole decades.

Erhard Ratdolt is "perhaps best known for the introduction of three-colour astronomical diagrams, and geometrical graphics in general, in printed books. His edition of Euclid's 'Elementa' (May 25, 1482),
for example, is indeed a milestone in the history of printing. Moreover, he was also an innovator in the design of the page itself. Instead of printing a "guide letter" in the center of a large blank space reserved
for the manual rubrication of initials he employed richly ornamented woodblocks. Originally from Augsburg, Ratdolt traveled to Venice, which was then the most important publishing center in Europe. According to the evidence from his book production, he spent at least a decade in this city, from 1476 to 1486″ (Redgrave).

Bibliography
Campbell, 142; Redgrave; Stillwell, 409- 440; Woodward [Five Centuries], 510-521.

Provenance
Provenance:
With the bookplate of Roberto Salinas Price (1938-2012), Biblioteca Huicalco, Mexico, 1977, on the inside front cover. Salinas was a Mexican industrialist with an interest in Homeric legends, about which he published a number of works.

Price:

Inventory reference: 21598

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