

# Who Made the Geese Book?

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## 1 Introduction

### Speaker 1

Who Made the Geese Book? Each volume of the Geese Book contains a colophon – a closing remark that was written after each was completed. Through these very self-conscious messages, one or more makers of a book communicated directly with the readers of that book. Through this convention, consumers, even those of future times, were informed of the producers' responsibilities in bringing the book into existence and in creating it in a particular way. Colophons in liturgical books could incorporate references to those officials who financed the project or raised the money, those clerics who initiated or commissioned it, as well as those authors and artists, craftsmen and craftswomen, who actually fashioned the manuscript. Included were writers who planned, compiled, or copied both music and text, as well as painters who ornamented or illustrated that notation and those words with decorative foliage or narrative illuminations. Colophons functioned like the credits that appear today at the end of films and television productions. The intentions of the colophons, however, exceeded those of present-day credits. Not wishing merely to be among the names connected with a project or to be remembered for work well done, medieval sponsors and artisans wanted to further their souls' salvation. In sacred manuscripts of the Middle Ages, these messages usually included explicit or implicit requests that the books' readers pray for the souls of those responsible for the work. In fact, from the vantage point of those who are mentioned in colophons, raising the visibility of one's work as an artist or obtaining social recognition as a donor or commissioner was to be perceived as an incidental byproduct, occurring in the course of pursuing more pious goals.

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A list of the archival sources, bibliography, and an index of the art objects and architecture shown in the videos can be found under the button "sources" on this web site.

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Transcription:

Anno domini millesimo quadringentesimo vicesimo primo in die Sancti Ambrosii episcopi completus est hic liber ad ecclesiam parochialem Sancti Laurentii in Nurmberg sub reverendo pastore magistor Heinricho Tandorffer doctore decretorum et sub magistris fabrice Andrea Volkmeyr et Petro Vogler quorum memoria sit in benedictionem. Scriptus per manum Johannis Gredinger.

English Translation:

Speaker 2

In the year 1421 on the day of Saint Ambrose the Bishop [April 4], this book was completed for the parish church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg under the revered pastor, Magister Heinrich Tondörfer, doctor of canonical law, and under the masters of works Andreas Volckamer and Peter Vogler, whose memory is to be blessed. Written by the hand of Johannes Gredinger.

This colophon is lettered with red ink. It names the pastor Heinrich Tondörfer, as well as the lay trustee, Andreas Volckamer, and the lay church master, Peter Vogler. Those using the book are reminded to remember them. Johannes Gredinger, the person responsible for the writing of the book – and who of course wrote the colophon – has modestly excluded himself from the request for remembrance, although by mentioning his own name he assures that he will not be forgotten.

Gredinger was not employed in the church of St. Lorenz. He was a friar at the Dominican Monastery in Nuremberg. We know from the colophons that he wrote in other books that he was an experienced and indeed aged scribe by this time. Several of his books survive in addition to this gradual: two theological treatises to be read in his own monastery, a calender written for use in the Nuremberg city hall, and another manuscript, today housed in the Staatsbibliothek in Munich. From the Dominican nunnery of St. Katharina in Nuremberg, a library catalogue survives. It indicates that Gredinger copied a book containing devotional writings on Christ's passion attributed to Saint Bernard, which Gredinger gave to the nun Elsbeth Pfinzing. He was acquainted with the Dominican women because he assumed pastoral duties for the convent including hearing confession.

## 2 Colophon

### Speaker 1

The colophons in the Geese Book do not include a request for remembrance or prayers on behalf of the sponsors or makers, but it goes without saying that this was expected.

### Speaker 2

In many ways, late medieval colophons assume the functions of the more elaborate self-reflexive images and texts that included information about multiple parties responsible for the making of a book, which begin during the earlier centuries of the Middle Ages. These references included administrators, donors, authors, scribes, and illuminators of manuscripts. Among the best known examples is the Codex Guta-Sintram, dated 1154, in which the nun Guta, who was the scribe, and the monk Sintram, who was the illuminator, represent themselves flanking the Virgin, whom they address in the inscriptions on the arches above their heads. Sintram beseeches Mary, “Virgin, remember poor Sintram” and Guta implores her, “Through you, branch of Jesse, I beg to become good, as I am named.” Guta denoted good.

In another well-known twelfth-century miniature three participants are represented in the lower margin: A scribe holds a quill. An illuminator grasps a paint brush and paint pot. He is identified in Latin as “H pictor,” and he is known from another representation to be Hildebertus. Below, the humble Everwinus, his eager assistant, scurries to his side with freshly ground pigments.

In another manuscript produced by the same artistic team, Hildebertus represents himself threatening the mischievous mouse that nibbles the cheese on his table. Amid the chaos, the chicken and its serving dish tumble to the floor. Hildebertus threatens the rodent physically, as he is about to hurl an object in the direction of this base disturbance that he claims “often provokes” him to wrath. A spiritual threat of damnation is lettered on the desk set up before Hildebertus. Everwinus is likewise present, calmly occupied painting a foliate border below. Art historians have speculated that the concern expressed by Hildebertus may have been directed not at the annoyance of vermin eating his supper but with some more significant threat to his sustenance, or with someone else taking that which Hildebertus considered rightfully his.

Illuminators and scribes could and would work themselves into the interstices. In other words, they could place themselves in the spaces otherwise left unoccupied in order not only to announce themselves but also to write about their own concerns. These included warnings and even curses should someone steal or misuse a book. Commonly during the early Middle Ages, scribes

would complain that readers were unaware of the bodily ordeals endured for the making of manuscripts: back aches, dimming vision, or bent posture.

“This is the book of Saint Maximinus which Hato, the librarian, commissioned to be written for God and Saint Maximinus at such expense that if anyone removes it from this place without intending to return it, may he be damned along with the devil. Amen. So be it.”

“Hic es liber S. Maximini, quem Hato armarius Deo et S. M. Scribere fecit, tali tenore ut si quis eum ab oc loco non redditurus abstraxerit, cum diabolo damnationem accipiat. Amen. Fiat”

“The art of scribes is hard compared with all other arts: the work is difficult, hard too to bend the neck, and plough the sheets of parchment for twice three hours.”

“Ardua scriptorum prae cunctis artibus est:  
Difficilis labor est, durus quoque flectere colla,  
Et membranas bis ternas sulcare per horas.”

Pictorially much could also be packed into one historiated initial. In one twelfth-century manuscript five participants inhabit one initial. The book contains the commentary that Florus wrote on the epistles of Saint Paul. Each individual’s responsibility for the book is made clear through his activities or gestures. They are arranged hierarchically. Below, the lay scribe Felix writes the text; above him, Richerus, the subprior of the monastery of St. Pierre at Corbie who commissioned the work, raises his arms in acclamation; above him, at the right edge of the loop of the P, Florus authors his commentary; at the left side of the loop, Saint Paul preaches to the Romans; and at the very top, Christ reigns in majesty over the cosmos.

In an even earlier book, the Hornbach Sacramentary, dating from 983, a series of texts and images covering eight pages, shows the sequence of responsibilities for the manuscript. The scribe Eburnant hands the book to Abbot Adalbert who had commissioned it. Adalbert gives it to Pirmin, the founder of the monastery of Hornbach. Pirmin donates it to their patron, Saint Peter. And Peter finally presents it to Christ. The accompanying texts on the purple-stained facing pages tell the story in the first person present tense, as if the story were unfolding before the eyes of the reader. This example stands out for its elaborateness.

#### Speaker 1

By the late Middle Ages these elaborate and very innovative visual arrangements – through which producers of books caught the interest of the books’ users and drew attention to them-

selves – had largely disappeared. Verbal colophons, however, proliferate. They can be simpler, more subtle, and more banal. The Geese Book colophons follow long-standing manuscript traditions in that they are self-conscious assertions about the making of the book, and they contain a list of participants.

Like most works of art, the Geese Book was the product of many minds and many hands. The colophons, written at the completion of each volume of the Geese Book, are understated and matter-of-fact. Resembling an *ex libris* they associate the book with the church, give dates, in one case name the writer, and then incorporate a short list of names telling who held specific offices at this time – thereby conveying who was responsible for the project.

Latin transcription of colophon in vol. I:

Iste liber pertinet ad ecclesiam sancti Laurentii in Nurembera: quem scripsit Fridericus Rosendorn eiusdem ecclesie vicarius ano salutis 1507 quo tempore Antonius Kress juris utrius doctor prepositus. Hieronimus Schurstab prefectus Andreas de Watt magister fabrice eiusdem ecclesie extitit.

Speaker 2

English translation of colophon in vol. I:

This book pertaining to the church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg was written in the year of our salvation 1507 by Friedrich Rosendorn, prebendary of this church. At this time Anton Kress, doctor of canon and civil law, was the provost, Hieronymus Schurstab the church trustee and Endres von Watt the church master.

Latin transcription of colophon in vol. 2:

Ad ecclesiam sancti Laurentii in Nurenberga pertinet iste liber: cui ultima manus imposita fuit anno salutis 1510: quo tempore Antonis Kreß juris utriusque doctor prepositus: Jacobus Groland prefectus: Andreas de watt magister fabrice eiusdem ecclesie extitit.]

English translation of colophon in vol. 2:

This book, which was completed in the year of our salvation 1510, was made specifically for the church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg, at the time when Anton Kress, doctor of canon and civil law, was provost; Jacob Groland was church trustee; and Endres von Watt was the church master.

### 3. Friedrich Rosendorn

#### Speaker 1

The first person mentioned in the first colophon is Friedrich Rosendorn. The Latin verb *scripsit* translates literally as *wrote*. He *wrote* the book. This *writing* included the complicated tasks of organizing, compiling, and editing the chants that were to be used. Very probably Rosendorn also acted as scribe: lettering and copying the texts and the musical notation from pre-existing sources.

In 1468 “Friedrich Rosendorn of Nuremberg” is mentioned at the Augustinian collegiate church in Neunkirchen am Brand, located several miles north of Nuremberg. According to the remark, the prior had noticed the success of Rosendorn’s instructional activities and his leadership of the choir, when he was temporarily appointed curate there. This source attests to Rosendorn’s early experience, interests, and proclivities in liturgical chant. When he assumed his first position in Nuremberg is unknown.

In the colophon written at the time the second volume was completed, Rosendorn’s name is curiously missing. Other written sources explain his absence.

#### Speaker 2

The Nuremberg parish churches kept chronological lists of all those for whom the death knell was sounded, as well as records of the money that was collected for this service. For the other Nuremberg parish church, that of St. Sebald, two later handwritten copies of these lists have come down to us. They contain an entry for Friedrich Rosendorn, “prebendary of St. Lorenz,” for the period between Pentecost and St. Michael’s Day in 1507. In the book that was kept for the church of St. Lorenz the day is recorded exactly as the “Sunday after Mary,” referring to the day on which the birth of the Virgin Mary was celebrated, which was September 8<sup>th</sup>, making the day of Rosendorn’s death September 12<sup>th</sup>. (In these three archival sources, we see variant spellings not only for Rosendorn but also for the name of the church and for other words, all of which is symptomatic of the inconsistent orthography during these times. We also observe the wrong first name in the one list, typical for this kind of document during this period.) Nonetheless, the information rings out loud and clear, telling us that Rosendorn must have died already in 1507, shortly after the first volume was finished.

#### Speaker 1

Another source substantiates the occurrence of his death at this time. The Nuremberg city council kept minutes of their proceedings. The aldermen recorded on September 10, 1507, that the

church master, Endres von Watt, had followed the instructions in a donation charter, and in order to fill the vacancy resulting from the death of Rosendorn had named Sebald Storr, a curate at St. Lorenz, to take over the post as prebendary at the St. Nicholas Altar. The council confirmed the appointment. The slight discrepancy in dates may again be the result of clerical error. Probably the death date in the record of death knells was wrong, since other inaccuracies have been found in this book.

Item die pfrund so auff absterbn Hern Friderich Rosendorn in der pfarkirchen zu Sant Lorenntzn auff Sant Niclas Altar ledig worden. Ist im rat bewilligt durch Endressn von Watt kirchenmeister dem ds nach laut der fundacion zustet zuleyhen hern Sebold Storr ainem statkynd und dem eltsten zugeselln im pfarrhof daselbst darzu er als aus bevelh ains rats presentiert ist ut in copia registrata. actum secunda post nativitatis mariae.

English translation:

Speaker 2

Further, upon the death of Herr Friedrich Rosendorn, the prebend at the St. Nicolas Altar in the St. Lorenz parish is vacant. The council wills that the post go to Sebald Storr, a native of Nuremberg and the most senior of the curates associated with the parish, who was first chosen to assume the position, as stated in the foundation charter, by the church master, Endres von Watt, and was now presented, as instructed, to the council and registered in writing.

Given on the second day after the Feast of the Birth of the Virgin

Speaker 1

No one replaces Rosendorn as the writer in the colophon of the second volume of the Geese Book. This probably indicates that he was commemorated primarily for the ambitious efforts compiling and editing rather than merely copying and lettering, and it would imply that this preparatory work was necessarily completed before the actual production of the volumes began.

Speaker 1

The colophon tells us that Rosendorn was a so-called *vicarius* or *vicar* at St. Lorenz, meaning that he held a prebend at one of the altars or in one of the churchyard chapels. The passage from the city council minutes indicates that Rosendorn's prebend was at the St. Nicholas Altar in the church.

Founded in the fourteenth century, the St. Nicholas Altar was one of the oldest in St. Lorenz. It probably stood on the south side of the nave on the west side of the pier at the threshold to the choir. Remnants of an altarpiece from the time of Rosendorn survive in the church.

The gilt wooden figures depict Saint Nicholas together with Saint Ulrich. Flanking these figures when the altar shrine was open, the interior surfaces of the wings once showed reliefs of a saintly bishop and of Saint Martin. On their exteriors, images of saints Oswald and Nicholas attributed to the painter Hans von Kulmbach, were visible when the altar was closed. Two further panels with images of saints Cosmas and Damian, now in the German National Museum [Germanisches Nationalmuseum], once provided the standing wings, which flanked the shrine most of the days of the year, when the movable wings remained closed. As late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the altar shrine rested on a predella. This lower portion of the altar contained a sculpture of Christ's entombment. The wings or shutters of the predella bore images of saints.

At the height of expansion in St. Lorenz – just before the Reformation – approximately thirty clergymen were employed in the church and its associated chapels outside in the surrounding churchyard. Twenty prebendaries were supported through individual endowments that were connected with specific altars. Typically a donor would have an altar or even a chapel erected and dedicated to the saint of his or her choosing. This necessitated putting up enough capital to endow the altar's prebend. Such endowments were similar to endowed chairs at universities today. In other words, the priest who held the prebend received his salary from the income on feudal holdings or the interest yield on donated capital.

Many donors also provided houses for their prebendaries. Most lived on the short street that extended northeast from the church down toward the [Pegnitz] River. Coats of arms chiseled in stone are still visible today on two houses, giving us lingering visual identification of the donors and evidence that each house belonged to the endowment for an altar and was occupied by a prebendary. This priest or *vicar*, as he was called in Germany, was obligated to say masses at his altar, including festival masses commemorating the titular saint or saints as well as any other saints who were celebrated there and memorial masses for the donor or donors and their family members. At times donors could supplement an existing prebend with donations in the form of a residence for the priest, agricultural commodities, revenues from estates and lands, rents, payments from mortgages on city properties, or interest income on monetary capital. In each case the donation was tied to specific additional duties of the cleric who had the benefit of the donation. Subsequent prebends could also be established. Rosendorn held one of two prebends at the St. Nicholas Altar.

Legal documents were drawn up to specify the duties of the prebendaries, to ensure their perpetual compliance, and to record all the obligations, financial instruments, assets, property, and furnishings belonging to an altar. Often the prebendaries were required to oversee their prebends and keep the books and papers in order.

## Speaker 2

Many such records for the St. Nicholas Altar prebends are preserved in the Bavarian State Archives in Nuremberg. Among the extant documents are two separate lists of estates, one for each of the prebends. Records for the older prebend go back to 1343 and include a bequest by Hans Hesel or Heselein in 1375. An inventory from the older prebend lists twenty-five charters, most with hanging wax seals, many dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, all of which had been kept with the altar records. The cleric holding the older prebend was responsible for celebrating mass at or around 8 o'clock every day at the St. Nicholas Altar.

The second prebend had been donated in 1407 by the widow Agnes Gößwein of Hilpoltstein. Any priest holding this prebend, including Rosendorn, was obligated to say mass four times per week. The estates that supported the prebend were largely in the vicinity of Hilpoltstein, a town south of Nuremberg. An extant document lists nine estates together with their required commodities, the unit of measure to be used—whether that of Nuremberg or another locality, and delivery dates—usually annual (for example, four chickens in fall, four hens at Carnival, eighty eggs at Easter, cheese at Pentecost, and a bread at Christmas), with the occasional stipulation that a given amount of cash could be paid as a substitute.

Later Kunz Schlayff (also called “Schlayffsmid”) donated another mass to be read on Wednesday. Upon his death, his wife Kunigunde, established an additional donation of four guilders annually, and obligated the prebendary to celebrate an anniversary mass for her husband and herself. On each of these occasions the prebendary was required to pay all the expenses including the hire of the other participants: 24 pfennig went for oil used in the votive lamp, 12 pfennig for the provost to attend the vigil, 16 pfennig for each of the other nineteen prebendaries and the five curates, 6 pfennig for the choir master, 6 pfennig for the sacristan, 6 pfennig for the sacristan’s servant, 28 pfennig for candle wax, and 3 pfennig as a gratuity. If anything was left the prebendary could keep it.

A similar set of instructions documents the administration of anniversary masses at the St. Nicholas Altar to commemorate the priest Lorenz Allenstich, prebendary at the St. Andrew Altar, who died in 1498 and Marcus Hirschvogel former provost of St. Sebald church and subsequently prebendary at the altar dedicated to the Four Church Fathers in St. Lorenz, who died in 1504.

After Rosendorn’s death an additional bequest came to the prebend through the executors of Kunigunde Schlayff’s will. Yet another endowment came from Rosendorn himself, in the form of an anniversary mass. An estate at Hundsdorf provided the revenues for the masses commemorating Allenstich, Hirschvogel, and Rosendorn.

Speaker 1

The duties of priests like Rosendorn were multifarious. For older prebends the priest had to act as a feudal lord, representing the interests of the institution and ensuring proper cash flow. For example, a surviving manual provides information and instructions for the priest. He is given directions about choosing the tenants who produced the income supporting the prebends: they were not to be indebted, were to have no other lord, and were to be married in order to assure not only that the men were capable of assuming responsibility, as was necessary for a family, but also to assure the additional labor of the wife. A formal fealty oath, as set down in the leather-bound booklet that was among the papers belonging to the prebend, was to be read aloud to the tenant, who was to swear that he agreed with all the terms. The required amounts of commodities—oats, rye, chickens, geese and cheese—are stipulated. The booklet likewise records some expenses incurred by the priest, for example clothing and paper. Each prebend of the St. Nicholas Altar thus maintained its own existence as an independent enterprise, while sharing the altar and some of the liturgical furnishings.

According to one of the sources, furnishings for the St. Nicholas Altar were kept in two places: one was in the sacristy and the other in a cabinet with three compartments, located in the wall, in a corner of the building near the altar. Records for the older prebend describe seven chasubles to be worn by the priest when celebrating mass, *vasa sacra* of gilt silver consisting of two chalices and two patens, a *pacem* used for the kiss of peace during mass with an “tiny old sack” containing relics—a splinter from Christ’s cross and thorn from his crown of thorns, likewise two corporal burses—one with an image of Christ in bead-work, two missals (containing the chants for the priest celebrating mass) – one a manuscript, the other a printed book. Rosendorn’s prebend was furnished with one silver gilt chalice, a small silver gilt paten, another paten with an image of the Lamb of God, a missal handwritten on parchment, 3 corporal burses: one of yellow silk, another of red arlas, and yet another of blue velvet; 6 chasubles: one of blue velvet, one of blue damask, an old one of white damask, a brown and red one, one of black damask, and an old one, red and gold. A pluvial described as being of blue velvet with gold background – probably indicating brocade likewise belonged to this benefice. This last item was donated by the cleric who compiled the inventory, Rosendorn’s successor Sebald Stor.

Speaker 1

No portrait of Rosendorn survives, although the likenesses of several other prebendaries have come down to us. Jodocus or Jobst Krell held just such a post from 1446 to 1483. Since he had endowed his own altar he included a figure of himself as a kneeling donor on the altarpiece that

he commissioned. Below, in the *stipes* of this altar, a separate chamber was provided for the safe-keeping of the furnishings belonging to it. The wooden door could be locked.

Other images of prebendaries in St. Lorenz are preserved in the epitaphs, to commemorate them after death, and to solicit prayers for their souls' salvation. These were often displayed near the altars at which they had served. For example, a second image of Jodocus Krell appears on his epitaph from the year 1483. He kneels before a row of saints. In 1488, Leonhard Spengler, who held the prebend at the altar dedicated to the Four Church Fathers, was depicted kneeling before the Man of Sorrows flanked by the Apostles Philip and James. In 1494, Georg Rayl, who held one of the prebends at St. Kilian's Altar, was represented kneeling in the foreground of a crucifixion scene with the Virgin and Saint John. He was interred in the cemetery surrounding the church. This painting originally hung near the altar at which he had served. For Friedrich Rosendorn no record of an epitaph survives. Rosendorn is not among the clerics for whom records of tomb slabs survive. In St. Lorenz prebendaries were usually buried in front of the altars at which they had served.

It is not known when Rosendorn took up his post at the St. Nicholas Altar. In the prebend documents his name appears only once, in connection with his own anniversary Mass. It is therefore possible that he had not held the prebend long at the time of his death. A different kind of source, a record of the money received in the St. Lorenz collection boxes [the so-called *Almosengefällbuch*,] reports that Rosendorn held his first mass already in 1478. Thus we know that he had been a cleric for over twenty-five years at the time when he was entrusted with planning, compiling, and writing the Geese Book. During these years he must have served for some time as a notary, since a document from 1500 concerning the inheritance of another cleric was issued by him in this capacity.

#### Speaker 1

It is Rosendorn's manuscript production that has been more clearly documented. His name appears in an entry in an account book from the collegiate church of St. Gumbertus in Ansbach.

#### Transcription:

Exposita uff die antiffner [14]96

14 fl. 6 lb. 7 d gestet der clein antiffner de adventu domini usque post octavas epiphanie von Rosenthorn, caplan zu sant Lorentzen zu Nurmberg, prout sequitur. Item 4 fl. fur 40 heut, darauß sind geschnitten 20 quatern. Item 9 gulden 3 ort von den 20 quatern zu schreyben und notiren je von einem plat 15 d. Item 2 lb von 2 puchstaben zu florisieren. Item einzupinden 6 lb 10 d und fur das geschmeid.

English translation:

Speaker 2

Exposition of the antiphoners 1496

The small antiphoner, from the Advent of our Lord to the octave of Epiphany, from Rosendorn, curate at St. Lorenz in Nuremberg, cost 14 guilders, 6 lbs., 4 pfennig, as follows:

Item 4 guilders for 40 hides, from which 20 quaternios were cut. Item 9 guilders 3 *ort* for the writing and notation of the 20 quaternios, at 15 pfennig a piece. Item 2 pounds for the floral decoration of two initials. Item for the binding and the metal work 6 pounds 10 pfennig.

Speaker 1

In this document he is called a curate at St. Lorenz in Nuremberg, indicating that he had first served as a member of the collegium, the group of six clerics who assisted in the administration of this large parish. It was from this position that he, like his successor Sebald Stor, received the benefice at the St. Nicholas Altar.

From this source we learn that already in 1496, Rosendorn had been paid for the making of an antiphoner. The term is derived from the contents of this liturgical book. An antiphoner included antiphons that framed the psalms as well as the responsories, all of which were chanted during the offices. Antiphoners were used when the clergy assembled for chant in the choir seven times each day in observance of the canonical hours. Rosendorn's book covered the portion of the church year from Advent through the octave of Epiphany. The two volumes for the other two parts of the year were ordered from another source. It appears that Rosendorn acted here as a contractor, receiving remuneration for parchment and binding including metal fittings, as well as for the floral decoration of two initials all of which he would have procured from other sources or subcontractors. He was likewise paid for his own work, which consisted of the planning and compilation, as well as the writing of text and notation.

## 4. Georg Rayl

### Speaker 2

At least one other St. Lorenz cleric prepared liturgical manuscripts. He was Georg Rayl. Inventories of books that were still present in the St. Lorenz sacristy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries list a two-volume choir book that Rayl completed in 1475. Perhaps it was also a gradual like the Geese Book. The work is listed along with several others characterized as “old parchment books” and is described as “very finely written and ornamented with painted initials.” A two-volume antiphoner that Rayl wrote in 1471 for the parish of St. Sebald resides today in a Nuremberg school library [Melanchthon Gymnasium]. Rayl included his name in the colophon, and the date in a bas-de-page design. As was common for liturgical books, this antiphoner too, contains historiated initials. They illustrate stories pertaining to church festivals, for example the story of Pentecost. Some include the application of gold leaf, as in the initial for Easter showing Christ’s resurrection. An artist was undoubtedly hired to provide these.

Far more creative are the unique calligraphic flourishes and caricature-like faces embedded in the less important initials and emerging from the extensions of letters, often serving as fanciful bas-de-page miniatures. Executed with pen and black ink, finished off with subtle and judiciously chosen pastel colors—pink, green, yellow, and blue, with small amounts of red—all applied with a brush, these one-of-a-kind cartoon-like drawings enliven the pages. Rayl himself must have fashioned them, since they continue in the same self-assured practiced scribal hand. Many are rendered with great economy of means—faces composed of but a few steady strokes of the pen. Although some faces seem to peer out frontally from the manuscript, most appear as distinctive, sometimes almost deformed profiles. All are male. Although some sport outlandish head coverings, many of the heads are suggestive of those of clerics, several wearing miters, some wearing cowls, many appearing to be tonsured. These features suggest that Rayl may have intended them as self-reflexive of their users, the clerics of St. Sebald who sang from the books when they gathered in the choir stalls seven times each day for the offices during the canonical hours. He has also placed special emphasis on the mouths. Several stick out their tongues, a contortion expressing disrespect, common in marginalia and corbel sculptures since the early Middle Ages. With many others Rayl seems to have been playing with metaphorical notions of sound and song emanating from the mouths. In some cases it is a single continuous stroke of the pen, from which twigs, branches, or floral arrangements emerge.

It need not surprise us that someone so adept at compiling and decorating a liturgical manuscript might act as an advisor for another work that was commissioned. Sources show that

in 1490 and 91 Rayl was consulted by the Collegiate Church of Neunkirchen am Brand, located north of Nuremberg, when this church commissioned Nuremberg artisans to fashion an elaborate monstrance. The work survives to the present day and is still used in Corpus Christi processions.

#### Speaker 1

Was the church of St. Lorenz a center for the production of liturgical manuscripts? The question cannot be easily answered. We have evidence of two names of priests from St. Lorenz who compiled and/or wrote and executed some decorations. And it is recorded that they performed work for other institutions: the parish church of St. Sebald and the Collegiate Church St. Gumbertus in Ansbach. By the way, preparing the antiphoner for Ansbach would have meant that Rosendorn had to familiarize himself with the liturgy of another bishopric, namely that of the Diocese of Würzburg. Nonetheless, at this late date, after the invention of printing, we note that the making of manuscripts was a very specialized occupation. Only a few experienced individual clerics were involved in the making of liturgical books and then, only in certain aspects, such as the planning, calligraphy, and very limited kinds of decoration. Others outside of this clerical community, would have been responsible for other facets of production, including both the more mundane tasks of preparing the parchment and the more spectacular responsibilities of elaborate illumination.

## 5. Anton Kress

The second name in both colophons is Anton Kress. The text calls him *plebanus*, literally people's priest. Since 1477, the office of the pastor of the parish of St. Lorenz had been elevated to the level of *probst*, corresponding to the English "provost." In each case the colophon tells, that the volume was completed during the period when Anton Kress was in office, and it has often been assumed that he was responsible at least for commissioning the Geese Book, if not for actually donating it. Perhaps he has been associated with the book more than anyone else because, at some later time in history, his visage rendered in a seventeenth-century copper engraving was pasted into the cover of both volumes of the book.

Many documents survive that not only bear witness to the family background, personal history, professional life, and the saga of the illness and death of Anton Kress, but also give details about his appearance, character traits, habits, proclivities, and what we might call his donor personality.

The Kress family was one of approximately forty patrician families of Nuremberg who belonged to the oligarchy that ruled the city, by exclusively occupying the seats in the upper chamber of the City Council. These burghers fashioned themselves as an urban aristocracy. By their own account, membership was determined by bloodlines, and these patricians therefore claimed to allow little social mobility. In 1516, the Nuremberg patrician Christoph Scheurl wrote to the reformer Johann Staupitz describing the political and social structure of the city in the following terms:

Speaker 2

"The government of our city and the commonweal rest in the hands of ancient families, people whose ancestors, even back in the earliest days, were also members of the government and ruled the city. Foreigners who have settled here, and common people, have nothing to say, nor ought they to, for all power is of God, and only those may exercise it whom the Creator has endowed with special wisdom. Therefore we admit no one into our Council [...] whose parents and grandparents did not also sit in the Council. It is true that some exceptions are now being made to this rule, and that some newer residents (but they are men of honest birth and distinguished family) have entered the Council. [...] But concerning these things there are no laws: still, they are generally observed [...]" [Gerald Strauss, *Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century*, New York 1966, 61–62]

Speaker 1

Scheurl's words demonstrate the importance of a family's deep roots in Nuremberg. Similarly marriage within this elite level was significant. It was expected that the men of this circle would share in government and that they would become public persons, working for the commonweal. One manner in which this could be accomplished was by donating for the public good. One of the most certain ways to assure that communal visibility would endure was to commission what history has subsequently deemed "public art," especially in prominent places.

The Kress family had met all of the criteria. They could trace their roots back to at least the fourteenth century in Nuremberg. They had consistently married with other patrician families. The mother of Anton Kress was Katharina Löffelholz, likewise from the patrician caste. Both families had established an enduring public presence in the city through their donations. The Löffelholz family had commissioned substantial works, a number of them in the church of St. Sebald. Identifiable through the coat of arms displaying a lamb, many of these objects from the fifteenth century can still be seen in and near the west choir of the church, where the family was buried. For example: The remnants of an altarpiece dedicated to Saint Catherine including the dramatic carved figures exhibiting her martyrdom; a painted epitaph showing Christ Being Crowned with Thorns, another with the Flagellation of Christ, and yet another with the Annunciation. In the parish of St. Lorenz, the Epitaph for Johannes Löffelholz painted by Hans Traut in 1504 commands attention.

Speaker 2

The coat of arms of the Kress family was likewise easy to find in Nuremberg. In fact, it still is. In 1412, Anton Kress's great uncle and aunt, Hilpolt Kress and his wife Ottilia, commissioned a double chapel dedicated to Saint Leonhard at the Augustinian Monastery. When the chapel was dismantled in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the oriel was reconstructed as part of the then new German National Museum. The church of St. Sebald once displayed many Kress arms on furnishings. Hewn into the corbel on one of the north nave piers in St. Sebald, the family escutcheon still marks the figure of St. Matthias as a donation of the Kress family.

The main city residence of the Kress family overlooked the Nuremberg Obstmarkt or fruit market. Today a figure showing Anton's brother Christoph, clad in full armor emblazoned with the Kress arms adorns the building at this location and surveys the space below—today occupied by parked cars. This figure, dating from the time of the extension of the Nuremberg city hall in 1889 was commissioned by August Essenwein, designed by Friedrich Wanderer, and executed by Georg Leistner. The figure is reminiscent of the family's patron saint, the armor-clad knight,

who wields a sword as his weapon and attribute, the same object that appears on the family's coat of arms and serves as its identifying logo.

#### Speaker 1

Saint George reigned as the dedicatory saint over the church most associated with the Kress family. It is located outside of Nuremberg at Kraftshof, where, like many of the self-styled urban aristocracy, the Kress family maintained residency in a small castle. For a time, the family also owned the hunting lodge at nearby Neunhof. The foundations of the current structure are believed to date back to a building erected by Hans Kress in 1480.

Located on the flat and fertile herb and vegetable-producing area outside of Nuremberg, this fortified village church still dominates the countryside. Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Kraftshof pledged loyalty to Nuremberg and accepted troops from the imperial city at times when Nuremberg was threatened militarily. Destroyed during World War II and rebuilt with funds from the Samuel H. Kress foundation, the church still preserves many of the furnishings donated by the family during the late Middle Ages. After establishing their country residence there at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Kresses soon took over the trusteeship for the church on behalf of the Nuremberg City Council. Various members of the Kress family invested substantial sums in order to establish their feudal presence here visually. The family made this small church into a worthy edifice with furnishings comparable to those of the two large Nuremberg parishes, they emblazoned these objects with Kress arms, and they used the church and surrounding churchyard as their last resting place. In 1665 Marx Christoph Kress transcribed documents and compiled a family chronicle, which still exist in handwritten form. Although, as the historian Gerhard Hirschmann has demonstrated, the family's attempts to claim a presence here in the early fourteenth century may be based more on myth than on history, the transcriptions of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-century sources are valuable. In his dissertation from 1909, the art historian Fritz Traugott Schulz cites another manuscript compiled by Marx Christoph Kress. This one, from 1676, contained a copy of the inventory set down by the sister-in-law of Anton Kress, Helena Tucher Kress. Together these copies of documents attest to the quality and quantity of the furnishings once present: twenty-three chasubles, pluvials, monstrances, chalices, and other *vasa sacra*, corporals, corporal burses, altar cloths, bells, candelabra, thuribles, images—including panel paintings and altarpieces, as well as liturgical manuscripts—six missals, an antiphoner, a psalter and a book of vigils.

#### Speaker 2

In 1476, Hieronymus Kress and his wife Margareta Grundherr had donated the altar dedicated to Saint Leonhard as well as many luxurious vestments, a small figure of Mary for a monstrance,

as well as stained glass windows. In 1492 Lorenz Kress stipulated that the executors of his will should have a retable made for the main altar. The parents of Anton Kress, Anton senior and Katharina Löffelholz Kress, likewise donated an altarpiece and incorporated images of themselves as donors as well as figures of their sons: Anton II, Georg, and Christoph together with his wife Helena. At the time of the death of Anton's mother Katharina in 1505, a pupil of Albrecht Dürer was commissioned to paint an epitaph showing the Meeting of Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate. The scene was based on a woodcut showing this subject executed by Dürer a year earlier. The epitaph displays images of thirteen family members.

Anton's famous younger brother Christoph served as captain of the Nuremberg forces and as a diplomat for the city of Nuremberg. Five years before Christoph's death in 1535, the German emperor elevated him and the Kress family to the status of nobility. His impressive tomb monument, displaying his full-figure effigy as knight in armor, dominates the interior of the church in Kraftshof.

#### Speaker 1

We thus are left with many visual remembrances and vestiges of the complex donational environment of the family into which Anton Kress was born. He himself is better documented through material objects and written sources than any other individual of his family. The wealth of written material has yet to be analyzed by historians. Among the documents is a horoscope showing the position of the constellations at the time of his birth, which was interpreted to show his disposition and as a portent of his later success. Highly unusual for the time, a biography was written and published just two years after his death. In addition to this Latin booklet authored by Christoph Scheurl and printed by Friedrich Peypus, two sixteenth-century German versions of the text have come down to us in handwritten form.

#### Speaker 2

Scheurl's *vita* begins with the birth of Anton Kress in 1478. Scheurl shows him as a bright child who could learn easily and was predestined to become a priest. Indeed other school children are said to have called him a "little pastor." Thus Scheurl narratizes his childhood to foreshadow the surprising turn that Anton's life took, when, at the behest of his home town and parish, he was ordained and returned to Nuremberg.

As did many sons of well-to-do Nuremberg patrician families, Anton attended a number of universities. Beginning his studies at sixteen, he matriculated at Ingolstadt, the university closest to Nuremberg, where he took up rhetoric and jurisprudence. His *vita* stresses that he was among the many high-born students of Sixtus Tucher, who taught in Ingolstadt before assuming the office of provost at St. Lorenz in Nuremberg. Another native of Nuremberg, Gabriel

Paumgärtner, was likewise professor there. Subsequently Anton Kress moved on to Italian universities. His wish to study with the famous professor Giason del Maino, led him to Pavia. Anton's detailed accounting of his expenses as a student in Pavia has survived.

In Italy he began to correspond with many friends and acquaintances. Letters that he kept among his possessions, are today conserved in the Kress Archives. They include missives from Sixtus Tucher, messages from Erasmus Topler, who was provost of St. Sebald, correspondence with Hieronymus Ebner, with whom Anton maintained a lifelong friendship and mutual support system, letters from the famous humanist Willibald Pirckheimer, a distant relative of Anton; and a written exchange with Conrad Nützel.

When Pavia was threatened by military conflict and plague, Anton moved on to the university of Padua, another prestigious institution known for its law faculty. After the dangers had passed he returned to Pavia. By 1503, Anton Kress was apparently planning to complete his studies and go to Vienna, the political center of the Holy Roman Empire. Kress wished to practice law and perhaps also dreamt of assuming a position as professor.

#### Speaker 1

On 1 September 1503, Sixtus Tucher wrote to Kress, informing him of his decision to resign his post as provost of St. Lorenz and ask the city council to find a replacement. In his letter, he warns Kress about the physical and mental strains of the job, and, initially, discourages his former student from seeking the position.

Later, however, Sixtus Tucher joins Erasmus Topper in giving Anton Kress encouragement. They advise him to go to the University of Siena, where he can graduate quickly. Following their recommendations, Kress matriculated at Siena and only a short time later, in November, was awarded a doctorate in canonical and civil law. His diploma is still among the papers in the Kress Archives.

According to the *vita* it was Hieronymus Ebner, by now an alderman in the upper chamber of the city council, who convinced the other members to elect Anton Kress as provost of St. Lorenz. At the time, Anton Kress was only twenty-six years old.

A prerequisite to assuming the position as pastor of this important parish, was of course ordination as priest. Johannes Polraus, a cleric and general counsel for the city of Nuremberg, was sent to Rome to facilitate the matter. Kress also benefited from the support of Caspar Wirt, the papal solicitor, proto notary, and resident representative of Nuremberg at the Vatican. As a result, Pope Julius II decided to issue a dispensation allowing Anton Kress to receive the first four levels of ordination within one week, in November of 1503. For this dispensation, Kress agreed to pay a substantial annual pension of seventy-five gilders to cardinal Giovanni Antonio Sangiorgio, who was at the time bishop of Frascati. In January of 1504, the pope decreed that the

position of provost be bestowed on Kress. The higher levels of ordination followed in February in Rome: He was ordained deacon in St. Peter's Basilica and priest in St. Pantaleo [Chiesa di San Pantaleo]. Anton Kress assumed the office of provost in April. Thus we see that those with power and influence in Nuremberg wanted to assure that the office was held by one of their own patrician caste, that he was a person with education in canon and civil law, and a man with international connections, all of which enabled him to act as a diplomat and especially as an ambassador representing the interests of the Nuremberg oligarchy before the pope and the papal curia.

## Speaker 2

Upon taking office, Kress was praised for his fairness, his personal neutrality in decision making, his engagement in social causes, and his sympathy for those who were not as well off as he. At least this is the picture painted in Scheurl's *vita*. The other personal characteristics include Kress's modesty, moderation, and his refusal to indulge in consumer luxuries. We read, for example, that he ate whatever was set before him and that he drank wine mixed with water. Other sources show his meticulousness in keeping books and records. An account book survives from the rectory, in which expenses for food, fuel, and small repairs are documented, as well as income generated from various sources. Anton Kress had to approve when the accounts were balanced once a year.

In the *vita*, Scheurl extols Anton Kress's love of the arts and especially his admiration for Albrecht Dürer. In fact the *vita* has come to be valued as an important source on Dürer's life as well, since it provides information recorded nowhere else. Scheurl claims that Dürer had wished to apprentice himself to Martin Schongauer. These plans were aborted when Dürer learned of Schongauer's death. The list of items in Anton Kress's library shows that he owned a printed passion series by Dürer.

One of his first endeavors as donor must have been a modest remodeling of the St. Lorenz rectory. When in the nineteenth century Alexander Heideloff rebuilt the premises, he recorded the appearance of a door with flanking Kress and Löffelholz arms and a chiseled date of 1504.

The duties of Anton Kress included overseeing and facilitating the donations of others. For example, between 1511 and 1513, he was able to negotiate an indulgence for the St. Anne Chapel donated by the textile merchants, Kunz and Barbara Horn. The chapel and charnel house on the eastern edge of the churchyard was lavishly furnished by this extremely wealthy couple. Although not occupying a place within the upper crust of patrician Nuremberg society, the Horns were striving to place themselves on the city map by way of donating important and ostentatious public works. Windows in the chapel, today in Coburg, were executed by the Hirsvogel workshop. The colorfully festive altarpiece commissioned of the painter Wolf Traut is today in Munich, and known as the Artelshofen Altarpiece due to its location following the

Reformation. Thanks to the efforts of Anton Kress, all who entered the chapel could receive the same indulgence as those who visited the stations in Rome. Thus many were aided: the faithful of Nuremberg did not need to undertake a perilous trip to Rome, the donors were rewarded with many more prayers for their souls since more visitors were enticed into the small edifice, and the parish benefited from the income that was left in the collection box.

Documents also show that Anton Kress put up the money for a well near the St. Anne Chapel, when the Horns refused to pay the necessary sixty-six gilders, one pound and fourteen pfennig. This was a substantial sum for the provost, whose salary was two hundred guilders per year. He likewise saw to it that holy water was brought from Rome and mixed with the water in the well.

#### Speaker 1

Anton Kress's donor personality crystallized around his office as provost and pastor of St. Lorenz. Scheurl lists Saint Paul first among Anton Kress's favorite saints. The idea to work Saint Paul into the already complete cycle of apostles that 130 years earlier had been mounted high on the nave piers was quite ingenious. The twelve figures, which included Matthias, the apostle named in Acts as the replacement for Judas, had watched over the parishioners since the fourteenth century. Kress, however, decided to commission a sculpture of Saint Paul—the other individual who was frequently depicted as the replacement for Judas. This makes Saint Paul the thirteenth apostle in St. Lorenz.

The figure sculpted by a “Master Veit,” perhaps Veit Leinberger, was mounted on a pier in the choir. This figure stood out among the others: Its style is quite different from those of the 14<sup>th</sup> century that give a somewhat ethereal dematerialized impression, as if no anatomy were present beneath the abstract drapery folds. Saint Paul's physiognomy and receding hairline are distinctive. With his left hand he steadies a long sword, his attribute and the instrument of his martyrdom. A sword was also the object that graced the Kress escutcheon. With his right forearm the saint presses a book against his body – the binding of which resembles many that were made at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Saint Paul does not face the center aisle, like the other apostles. He faces the east end of the church, thus addressing the figure of Christ who appears closest to him on the next pier. Further, unlike the other figures, Saint Paul marked a specific place beneath. According to one of the donation documents, the figure was installed over the seat of the provost in the choir stall. Thus it underscored the importance of that office.

Documents that survived into the twentieth century recorded the elaborateness of this donation. To provide a backdrop similar to those against which the other apostles were set, Kress commissioned an illusionistic painting suggesting a tapestry, hanging behind the figure as a kind of cloth of honor. Originally a curtain was suspended from a rod above, thus the figure could be

covered for protection and conservation, and also dramatically veiled and unveiled during particular days and seasons. A representation of the interior of the church of St. Lorenz painted by Georg Christoph Wilder in 1831 substantiates the presence of these rods bent into the shape of a horse shoe from which a curtain could be suspended. In the painting, the rod remains over the figure of Saint Peter.

Other elements bind the figure directly to the lasting memory of its donor Anton Kress. On the underside of the baldachin, which was replaced by a copy after World War II, the Kress shield with the sword is visible. The baldachin holds a small lindenwood figure of Anton's patron Saint Anthony, surrounded by all his attributes. He holds his tau-shaped cane and a bell, both used by the saint to ward off demons, and he is accompanied by a swine, the symbol of the temptation to lust.

Cleverly this project called many hierarchies to the minds of those who saw the figures and experienced them as co-inhabitants of the same space. According to the records of the decisions that have come down to us, the interior of the building was reserved for the donations and memorials of the patrician caste—or at least those outside of this caste had to be granted special permission. The wealthy textile monopolist Kunz Horn invested large sums to establish his donation complex outside the church, after he was not allowed a space inside. The space of the choir, occupied by the clergy who sat in the stationary choir stalls, was ranked higher than that of the nave, which was open to the lay folk, most of whom had no permanent places, but came, stood for a while, and then left again. The choir stalls provided ranked and ordered seating. The apostles had been subjected historically to a hierarchical ordering, with Saints Peter and Paul leading as the “princes” of the apostles. Thus with so many overlays of implicit hegemonic indicators, Anton Kress could quite subtly and modestly mark his place within the hierarchy. Carved in stone, the sculpture expressed the notion that it had always already been there, and it succeeded in maintaining its hegemony over the *longue durée* of five hundred years.

## Speaker 2

Over the centuries the Geese Book too had come to be associated primarily with Anton Kress. However, no documentation exists that connects it to him in a direct cause and effect relationship. Certainly if it had been a donation for which he personally provided the funding we would expect to find records among his papers and even more we would imagine that this object would have elicited the admiration of Christoph Scheurl, since it was costlier than the donations he mentioned in the *vita*. We can thus claim with certainty that this expensive and time-consuming project was undertaken with communal funds. What is more, in all likelihood the notion to undertake such a project and its initial planning probably originated while Sixtus Tucher was still in office. The actual production, however, must have commenced around the time that Kress took

up the post. Since the colophons tell us that the second volume was completed three years after the first, we might assume that a period of similar length was needed to produce the first volume. This would set the commencement of the project back at least as far as 1504 and possibly during the time of Anton's predecessor.

Certainly the project accompanied Kress during most of his time in office, and he must have overseen its progress and given ongoing advice. Anton Kress's support of the St. Lorenz School demonstrates his love of liturgy and music. As a so-called Latin school this preparatory school for boys served not only the patrician sons who, like Anton Kress himself, wished to go on to attain a university education in the letters, but also those who wanted to become priests, and at least some who later took up positions of leadership in family businesses. During their school days the boys attended classes in Latin grammar, liturgical chant, and music theory. In 1510 Anton Kress called the famous Johannes Cochleaus to the St. Lorenz school. Letters from Cochleaus are among the papers left by Anton Kress, today in the Kress Archives.

#### Speaker 1

The now famous missal that Anton Kress commissioned stands as the most tangible evidence of his love of liturgy and the arts. Certainly when he commissioned it around 1513 he perceived it as a companion piece to the two-volume gradual, and with this function in mind he stipulated in his testament that it should be passed on to his successor.

This elaborately illuminated missal was intended to be used by the provost to celebrate mass on high feast days. The colophon that credits Anton Kress as donor reads:

#### Speaker 2

Anno salutis christiane quingentesimo decimo terio supra millesimum Antonius Kress, juris utriusque doctor, ecclesie sancti Laurentii Nurenberge prepositus, hunc librum pro decore cultus divini et ad laude dei, beatissime virginis Marie atque beati Laurentii, martyris, prefate ecclesie contulit.

In the year of our Christian salvation 1513, Anton Kress, doctor of civil and canon law, provost of the church of St. Lorenz in Nuremberg, has left this for the embellishment of divine services and to the praise of God, the blessed virgin Mary and the blessed martyr Lawrence.

#### Speaker 1

In another colophon, Jakob Elsner takes credit for the illuminations:

Speaker 2

Iacobuvs Elsner civis nvrrenbergensis hvnc librvm illvminavit anno domini 1513.

Jacob Elsner, citizen of Nuremberg, illuminated this book in the year of our Lord 1513.

Speaker 1

Elsner fashioned one foliate initial in gold on red ground and two more elaborate foliate initials containing floral motifs. He painted an image of the *Angus Dei* as a *bas de page* in the mass canon. And he marked the mass formulas for five important holidays in the church calendar with historiated initials, in other words, with beginning letters that contain scenes or *historiae*. A particularly luxurious double-page spread introduces the mass canon itself. On the verso a conventional but subtly rendered image of the crucified Christ flanked by the Virgin and Saint John set within a vast landscape is framed by figures and objects rendered with a fascination for close-up detail that is prevalent in Flemish manuscript painting. Here, as if coming alive and occupying another dimension, the strewn flowers and angels exhibiting the instruments of the Passion transgress the boundaries of the scene within. As was common, the crucifixion group is paralleled on the facing recto by a depiction of the story of Abraham about to sacrifice his son Isaac. This narrative from the Hebrew bible was long considered as a typology or prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The large historiated initial forms the T of the *Te igitur* with which the mass canon begins. An unusual element that connects the miniature to the donor's family is the instrument that Abraham holds ready, exactly parallel to the cross beam of the T, as the angel on the opposite side grasps its tip to in order prevent the sacrifice and save Isaac. Although a sword occurs in other representations of this scene, the most common iconography places a knife or a dagger in Abraham's hand. Here the sword provides a clever self-referential motif alluding to the heraldic device on the Kress arms. In fact, in the lower border two colorful hybrid creatures hold the family's escutcheon showing the sword. Above the gold inscription on the plaque announces the donor: [Antonius Kres ivris vtrivsq[ue] doctor anno salvtis. 1513] Anton Kress, doctor of both civil and canon law, in the year of our salvation 1513.

Speaker 2

The two pages that command the most attention within the manuscript provide a kind of epitaph in the form of a devotional diptych. In this extremely self-conscious pair of miniatures, Anton Kress shows himself using his book. The binding of the missal that rests open on a large, green, tasseled cushion atop the pre dieu at which he kneels strongly resembles that of the book itself with its red velvet fabric and gilt mounts. Although the beholder is privy to a three-quarter view

of all the figures, Anton Kress is shown raising his head and sustaining a line of vision in such a way as to suggest that he is addressing the persons of the Trinity who are depicted enthroned on the juxtaposed verso. When saying or singing mass from the book, Kress effected the transformation of the eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ – the godhead made flesh. Perhaps for this reason the Trinity is represented in this unusual manner of the so-called *synthronoi* in which all three persons of the Trinity are depicted as human and seated next to one another on a broad throne. Indeed Christ who sits on the right hand of the Father, as suggested in several biblical passages, exhibits the nail prints in his hands and feet.

The visual strategy of showing the donated book open and in use by a devotee, usually the donor, and the focus of the object of devotion shown as if it were a vision or an unfolding narrative likewise occurs in other manuscripts. One example can be seen in the Brussels book of hours commissioned by the Duc de Berry, in which the Virgin and Child enthroned appear before the duke as he kneels in devotion, using his book of hours. Another is found in the book of hours of Marshall Boucicaut in which the Virgin appears to Boucicaut and his wife. Perhaps the most famous parallel example is that in the book of hours of Mary of Burgundy, which shows Mary seated at an open window, looking in on a scene set in a church as she reads in her book.

The body language of the three persons of the Trinity in the Kress Missal is highly suggestive. They are about to raise their hands in blessing, but the manner in which they exchange glances implies some hesitation, uncertainty, or debate. A small plaque lettered in gold, held by a putto who appears in the direct line of vision between Kress and the godhead may offer some interpretive clues. It is lettered with the words of Psalm 24, 7: *Delicta iuventutis mee et ignorancias ne memineris domine* (Lord, remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions). In the *vita*, Scheurl discusses the details of this representation and quotes the words from the plaque. He reads the words as those that Anton addresses to the Trinity, and also perceives the entire donation as one intended for the godhead. The triune God is thus shown in the act of judging the donor.

Another passage in the *vita* casts the words of the plaque in a slightly different light: Scheurl claims that Anton Kress never sought the company of evil women—except of course very seldom in his youth. Could it be that the remark was meant as a tantalizing bit of gossip to describe an earlier lifestyle from Anton's student days prior to his sudden decision to seek ordination and vow celibacy as a priest? Since humanists of this era were known for the innuendos they published that were meant only for an insider circle of (male) Latin readers, was Scheurl here inserting a subtle reference meant only for the initiated? Had Kress included this particular Psalm text as a personal autobiographical reference? For whatever reason, Kress did choose this verse as the lasting pious petition for his parchment epitaph. The association of this passage with Anton Kress must have been well known since it was also picked up by the later engraver who

fashioned the portrait pasted into the covers of both volumes of the Geese Book. Visible as part of the text in the book that Kress holds open with his fingers are part of the words of the passage: The syllables “delicta juven...” and “meae” are legible.

The missal, like the donations that Anton Kress undertook in the church interior, underscored his office and his profession. As was common, he included a saint as his special agent or recommender before God. Saint Lawrence, the titular saint of his parish, stands reassuringly behind Anton Kress, the saint’s hand raised, commending the priest by touch his shoulder. Family ties, on the other hand, are expressed through the Kress shield and crest encircled in a wreath of laurel held in place by two griffins in the lower border.

### Speaker 1

The career of Anton Kress lasted but ten years. A lamentation written just after his death survives in handwritten form. As was common during the late Middle Ages, following the tradition of monastic necrologies, the suffering endured at the end of life was juxtaposed with the virtues and good deeds accomplished during life. For Anton Kress we are told that he suffered from fever, headache, that he was weak, and by implication that he had perhaps lost weight and was anemic. In contrast to the monastic necrologies but common for humanistic tracts of the day, the Kress lamentation contains many references to classical literature. First Anton, and then his soul are addressed in the text. Those who stand at his bedside grieving are described in exacting terms as the death drama unfolds: his father, his sister, his sister-in-law Helena Kress, with whom, he maintained a close relationship, and “Bilbolt,” the nickname given to Willibald Pirckheimer, with whom he prays the words of the doxology.

### Speaker 2

On the basis of the lamentation and Scheurl’s text, we can assume that Kress was ill for some time. In his last will and testament he made provisions for the completion of donations that had already been initiated as well as for several other projects.

The Kress Missal itself was incomplete when he died. Since many folios remain blank it is likewise possible that more was intended and that the codex was then finished in a hurry. In his testament, Anton Kress stipulated, “Also I will that my parchment missal, which I had written, shall remain at St. Lorenz, and for this purpose I bequeath fifty guilders so that it can be fitted with mountings.”

The account book of the executors of Anton Kress’s will provides detailed information about the work they commissioned or remunerated. On 31 January 1514 the sum of 1 guilder, 2 pounds, and 23 pfennig was paid to an unnamed artisan who had made a container, so that the book “would not be damaged easily.” About three weeks later, on February 24, the illuminator

Jacob Elsner received 1 guilder and 20 pounds as a gratuity after illuminating the missal. It was common practice in Nuremberg that artists and artisans were given an additional payment that exceeded the contractual obligations if the client was pleased with the result. A small piece of paper is loosely inserted into the account book: It is the invoice of the goldsmith Paulus Mülner who requests payment for the gold fittings he had fashioned for the missal.

The front cover is adorned with a central medallion showing the lamb of God, and four others showing the symbols of the Evangelists: the eagle for John, the steer for Luke, the angel for Matthew, and the lion for Mark. The invoice reads: “The book weighs three *marks* minus one *lot* and one *quentchen*. The worth of the *mark* is calculated as 14 guilders, which gives the sum of 42 guilders. Deducted is 1 *lot* and 1 *quentchen*, which comes to 22 *schillings*. This leaves forty guilders and eighteen *schillings*. One of the executors added that this sum was paid on St. Sebastian’s Day. The account book records this payment, together with a gratuity of 25 *pfennig*, for the year 1515. This shows that the project was not completed and delivered until two years after the death of Anton Kress. The luxury missal is the only book in the inventory for the treasury of St. Lorenz compiled in 1530. The entry reads: “Also, a very beautifully illuminated missal with a red velvet cover with silver gilt latches, comes from the blessed departed Dr. Anthony Kress provost.” A book mark with six woven bands ornamented with acorns fashioned from fresh water pearls survives along with the codex. The missal is still kept in the box covered with a leather tooled acanthus leaf pattern, marked with the Kress arms and the date of 1514.

Sources show that Anton II also donated a panel with an image of Saint Christopher for the church at Kraftshof. He died having made the initial payment of twenty-five guilders to the Nuremberg painter Hans Plattner. After the panel was installed on Palm Sunday in 1514 the artist received an additional twelve guilders, and his wife and servant were each given three pounds and sixty pfennig as gratuities.

Most bequests, however, were intended for the church of St. Lorenz. In addition to the missal, he wills 25 guilders for vestments for St. Lorenz. The inventory from the year 1524 includes the following entry: “A vestment of black satin, which has no pluvial. This vestment was provided by the executors of the will of Anton Kress, provost of St. Lorenz.” Among the papers that are archived and pertain to the bequests is an invoice for the materials and labor to fashion a complete set of vestments worn by the priest to celebrate mass.

The other object is the epitaph, which Anton Kress instructed the executors of his will to have made. They were his father, Anton senior, to whom he left most of his money and possessions; Hieronymus Ebner, his friend since childhood; and Hans V Imhoff, one of the partners in the Imhoff Brothers Trading Company and a generous and civic-minded patrician who often assisted his friends in matters of banking and business. These friends included Albrecht Dürer and Katerina Lemmel. The papers pertaining to Anton Kress’s bequests are conserved in the Imhoff

family archives, indicating that Hans V may have taken the responsibility for executing many of his wishes. We may safely assume that the executors chose the material – bronze, the artist – Peter Vischer the younger, the motif – Anton kneeling in devotion, as he does in the missal, and the content of the inscription, “In the year of the Lord 1513, on the day of the birth of the Virgin, the honorable father, famous doctor of canon and civil law, respected provost of this church, Herr Anton Kress died. May his soul rest in peace.” The epitaph is unusual in three respects: In the style of the Italian Renaissance, it employs a degree of one-point linear perspective. It was the first epitaph to be rendered in gilt bronze in St. Lorenz. The figure of the deceased, albeit kneeling in devotion in front of a small crucifix, is the subject matter of the relief. Other epitaphs of this time, such as that for Anton’s mother, had as their focal point an image from salvation history. This emphasis on the man Anton Kress was certainly only acceptable in this monochrome medium, reminiscent of grave stone bronzes. From Scheurl’s description in the *vita* we know that the monument has always hung, where it does today, beneath the figure of Saint Paul. Originally, the seat of the provost in the choir stall was positioned below it. Sources from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century likewise record a full-figure bronze effigy on his grave stone before the main altar.

## 6. Hieronymus Schürstab

### Speaker 1

The next person named in the colophon of the first volume is Hieronymus Schürstab. In Latin he is called “prefectus.” German documents refer to his office as “Kirchenpfleger.” He was the lay trustee and administrator of the *fabrica ecclesiae*, in England sometimes called the “fabric of the church,” the legal entity and civic institution that owned and controlled parish property, comprising real estate and furnishings. As the patrician governing body of Nuremberg, the inner city council chose this trustee from among its own members, to supervise and act on its behalf. The ongoing costs for a large Gothic church like St. Lorenz, its upkeep and its operations, were substantial. This officer likewise authorized gifts of private donors, some of which came to rival communal enterprises. For the city of Nuremberg, the two parish churches provided stages for public display of authority and power. The buildings were therefore more than just the setting for masses and other liturgical rituals; they were the physical projection for the gross state product of all citizens of Nuremberg, whose combined wealth and labor had built and furnished the churches, and their architecture and rituals reflected this civic ideal. The size and characteristic design of the churches dominated the city-scape and served to form a recognizable visual identity. Particular cult practices and associated rituals were perhaps equally significant markers of civic pride. When, for example, the Holy Roman emperor, the only authority the city accepted as lord, visited Nuremberg, he was received at the gates of the city by the government, the clerics, and the people of Nuremberg. An august, ostentatious procession led first to the church of St. Lorenz.

### Speaker 2

The Schürstab family had made its fortune as an international trading company. It was first at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century that the Schürstab were accepted into the ruling Nuremberg oligarchy, after which family members were elected to Nuremberg’s highest offices. For Hieronymus, the rise through the ranks had been slow. With his marriage to Engel von Aal in 1470 he had formed a conjugal alliance with an aristocratic family. Four years later he was elected into the larger city council, a body that exercised only symbolic power in accepting the decisions of the inner city council.

After eighteen years his name finally appears as “older burgomaster” of Nuremberg, an executive officer who was to implement the decisions of the city council but also a preparatory position for those under the scrutiny of the alderman for entry into the highest positions of leadership. In 1492, Hieronymus was placed on the ballot for a position as alderman. Then his

ascent accelerated: In the year 1501 he became third commander of the Nuremberg forces and second “Losunger.” In 1505 he assumed the highest ranking position of Nuremberg, that of first “Losunger.”

In the first decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Hieronymus and his wife led many other donor families in commissioning windows for the cloister of the Carmelite monastery, at which Erhard Schürstab, the brother of Hieronymus, was the prior. Although later in the century, after the introduction of the Reformation, the monastery was demolished, many of the windows with their coats of arms survive. The Schürstab heraldic bearing is easy to identify. The speaking or canting arms display two crossed branches with flames meant to represent pokers. A poker used to stir a fire was known as a “Schürstab.”

#### Speaker 1

From his positions of civic authority and perhaps also based on his personal predilections, Hieronymus Schürstab approved and commissioned the making of the Geese Book on behalf of the “fabrica ecclesiae.” He likewise must have secured its funding. Living to view only the first volume, Hieronymus Schürstab died shortly after the colophon was penned in the year 1507.

## 7. Jakob Groland

### Speaker 1

In the colophon of the second volume Jakob Groland is listed as the “prefectus” or lay trustee, appointed by the city council to administer the so-called “fabric of the church.”

### Speaker 2

Born into one of Nuremberg’s leading patrician families, Jakob Groland entered into civic administration in 1478 as a “younger burgomaster.” In the following year he was elected to the lower chamber of the city council, the greater council, where he remained until 1492, when he became “older burgomaster.” This position made him eligible for more prestigious offices. In 1499 his name appears on the ballot as a candidate for the upper chamber, the so called “inner council,” the actual decision making body. But it was not until two years later that he was elected. He remained one of the seven aldermen until his death. In addition to his obligations in the almost daily council sessions, he assumed many other responsibilities. In 1503, he was appointed trustee for the pilgrims hospice of St. Martha. A cartulary, showing the sources of income for the hospice as well as the expenses, was drawn up by him seven years later, and survives in the Nuremberg city archives. Upon the death of Hieronymus Schürstab in 1507, he assumed the trusteeship for St. Lorenz. In 1510 he likewise took up yet another post as trustee, when he became the lay supervisor for the Nuremberg Carmelites. The last honor he received was the position of third commander of the Nuremberg forces in 1514. Jakob Groland died on 8 July 1515.

### Speaker 1

Jakob Groland appears as a highly experienced and respected individual in matters of finance. It cannot be known how much Jakob Groland was involved in decisions regarding the Geese Book other than to oversee its funding.

## 8. Endres von Watt

### Speaker 1

The last individual mentioned in both colophons is Endres von Watt. He is called the *magister fabricae*; in German: the Kirchenmeister; in English the master of the church fabric or simply church master. While the *prefectus*, or trustee, was the supervising patrician member of the city council, he was not involved in the daily operations and bookkeeping. For this purpose each parish had a church master, a manager whose task it was to inventory the *vasa sacra* and other furnishings and to oversee the formalities as various clerical positions were filled, to direct employees, including the sacristan and his servant, as well as to hire contractors and construction workers.

Many of these church masters had come from well-to-do, non-patrician families, who were on their way up Nuremberg's social ladder, but had not (yet) gained acceptance into the patrician oligarchy. In Nuremberg a group of "honorable" families had established themselves, providing a reservoir from which the city council would hire professional administrators. Over the years many of the "honorable" families had amassed considerable wealth, often surpassing that of the patricians, since they had invested in new profitable industries especially in metals and textiles that were not under the control of the patrician trading companies. In addition to managing their own enterprises they were public servants who accepted these duties to show allegiance to the governing class of Nuremberg and prove administrative competence so that one day the social status of their families might be elevated.

### Speaker 2

This profile fits the family von Watt. The "dance statute" of 1521 is the only written document that lists membership in the upper class by specifying which families were permitted to participate in official dances in the city hall. In addition to the patrician families, the statute likewise highlights six "honorable" families who occupy a level slightly lower. The von Watts were among them. Due to their lineage they were to receive invitations for official dances as long as they were honest, acted in conformity with their social status, and did not make a living by manual labor.

The von Watts were merchants from St. Gall who had settled in Nuremberg in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Endres's father, Peter von Watt, had been in the Diesbach-Watt merchant company that had been successful throughout central Europe trading in textiles, especially linen. When the company broke up around 1460, Peter von Watt started a merchant business of

his own. The social level of Endres von Watt was positively affected by the status of his mother Ursula, who, herself a daughter of the patrician family Pirckheimer, married into the Hegner family after the death of Peter von Watt, her first husband and the father of Endres.

In 1485 the city council of Nuremberg appointed Endres von Watt to succeed Franz Krall, who had held the position of church master for only one year. Endres von Watt held the office of church master of St. Lorenz for the unusually long period of 34 years. One of his administrative tasks for St. Lorenz was audible throughout the city: The death of burghers was publicly announced through the ringing of church bells. For this service the church master collected a fee from the family of the deceased, and he recorded the name and date on which the service was performed. It may be noted in passing, that, compared with his predecessors, Endres von Watt was not an exacting bookkeeper. Especially during the later years of his tenure, entries were often made with great delays, the dates given are not precise, and some names are missing. Endres von Watt was also responsible for collecting alms: The account book for the offering box of St. Lorenz provides detailed information about the charitable donations received on each feast day of the church year. These two sets of records were kept in one book. Preserved today in the Bavarian State Archives in Nuremberg, the documents are among the most valuable biographical and statistical sources for the city.

Endres von Watt assumed other important duties as well. He oversaw the finances for the hospice of St. Leonhard. Most importantly, in 1492, he appears on the official list of municipal employees as Master of Public Works, which made him the authority who passed judgment on new and old construction projects in Nuremberg. Von Watt often assumes the role of expert in court cases pertaining to building construction. Further he is frequently entrusted with the task of selling real estate on behalf of minors, again pointing to his competence in judging the value and condition of buildings. What is more, he must have been a reliable and trustworthy friend to many citizens of Nuremberg, since he was repeatedly asked to witness documents, charters, testaments and to serve as trustee for the settling of estates. In several instances he is appointed guardian for the inherited property of minors. Clearly his knowledge of real estate and construction made him especially suitable to care for a large church like St. Lorenz that was in need of constant repair.

His responsibilities were however not limited to matters of buildings. When Margrave Friedrich of Brandenburg visited Nuremberg in 1496, Endres von Watt was named one of three "kitchen masters," who oversaw the splendid banquets that were hosted to honor the guest. In 1495 an imperial diet decided to follow the plan of Emperor Maximilian I to levy an additional tax within the entire Holy Roman Empire. The revenue was to be used to fight the king of France and the advancing Turks. The city council of Nuremberg implemented this tax in 1497 and von Watt was one of three officials assigned to collect it. Endres von Watt's performance as tax col-

lector must have pleased the city council since he became part of another fiscal project which was undertaken in the wake of the Bavarian War of Succession in 1504. The military participation of Nuremberg on the side of Albrecht IV of Bavaria-Munich had emptied the city's coffers. In order to balance the budget, the city council introduced a value-added tax on grain and appointed Endres von Watt to collect the revenue.

#### Speaker 1

Endres von Watt demonstrated personal interest in liturgical furnishings through his activities as a private donor, assuring his own perpetual remembrance in the church of St. Lorenz. A widower without children, Endres was in a position to make substantial donations with the capital he had amassed during his lifetime. These gifts are noted in several inventories. By 1512 he had donated four chasubles for use in the church, two of black camelhair, and two of white damask. A portable sculpture of the Virgin Mary, probably of silver and weighing more than 27 pounds, is the heaviest of the figures listed in the church treasury of 1524. The same inventory describes a full set of vestments that he donated already in 1515. It included a dalmatic, a chasuble with an appliqued crucifix, and a pluvial of brocade with black velvet on a patterned yellow background.

His contribution to the Geese Book project must have consisted of managing the finances for the project: accepting invoices at various stages, paying those who labored on the manuscript, and coordinating their efforts. In April of 1519 Endres von Watt retired from his position as church master. When he died nine years later the liturgy he had helped to establish through the Geese Book had already been radically altered by the Reformation.

## 9. Sixtus Tucher

### Speaker 1

One important participant is not mentioned in the colophons of the Geese Book. If the decision to fashion a new gradual for St. Lorenz occurred four or more years before the first volume was completed, it may well have been Provost Sixtus Tucher who initiated the project.

### Speaker 2

Born the second child of Anton I Tucher and his wife Barbara, née Stromer, Sixtus Tucher descended from some of Nuremberg's oldest and most prominent patrician families. Anton I Tucher, the father of Sixtus, had risen to the highest municipal office, that of first *Losunger*. He was also a successful businessman, and Anton II, the older brother of Sixtus, followed in his father's footsteps, leading the family trading company, a post he had to give up when he himself became the first *Losunger* of Nuremberg. Choosing a completely different career path, Sixtus decided to pursue a university education and to study law, which opened many professional possibilities, while it closed others. Many well-paid posts for administrators in court circles, in civic governments, and within the hierarchy of the church necessitated a law degree. In Nuremberg, however, the regulations of the city barred anyone with a formal university education from election to the inner city council, the center of power within the metropolis. At the age of fourteen Sixtus matriculated in the University of Heidelberg and received the baccalaureate degree just a year and a half later. Then in 1475 he took up the study of jurisprudence and subsequently, like many sons of affluent German families, continued his education in Italy. Foreign study offered opportunities to form networks that were advantageous later in life as the bonds of friendship established during student days proved supportive as individuals ascended various career ladders. Further, students had the chance to connect with the most prominent teachers and proponents of new ideas. Sixtus Tucher met Johann von Dalberg, the future archbishop of Worms, and Giovanni Pico, Count of Mirandola, the wealthy humanist and philosopher whose *Nine hundred Theses* caused a stir in academic and religious circles two decades later. Likewise students could amass cultural capital as they immersed themselves in the life style of the Italian elite, taking dance lessons from Italian masters, spending significant sums on fashionable clothing, and learning to enjoy good food and fine wine.

This is not to say that Sixtus Tucher wasted his time in Italy on frivolous matters or that he neglected his studies. From 1477 to 1480, Tucher was enrolled as a student of civil and canon law at the university in Padua. Years later, in a letter to his pupil Anton Kress, Sixtus Tucher

described the sumptuous clothing of the Paduan students and lamented the associated social pressures. Not only annoyed by these excesses but also hampered by conflicts and tensions between the students and the university administration, he moved to the University of Pavia. Later he wrote of other problems he experienced in Pavia, particularly the threat of robbers lurking to prey upon students out and about in the streets after dark.

While still a student, Sixtus Tucher was able to secure his first prebend, a canonry at the well-endowed church of Sts. Peter and Alexander in Aschaffenburg. Surely this post provided an important source of income and an opportunity for barter. Within months, Sixtus exchanged this canonry for a prebend at the St. Nikolaus Alter in the palace chapel of Aschaffenburg, which had previously been held by one of his cousins. Sixtus must have hired a cleric to perform his duties in Aschaffenburg in his absence.

No source informs us about any ordination of Sixtus in Italy, but it may be assumed that these formalities were easily arranged. Indeed many influential cathedral and collegiate canons never took more than the lower orders and saw no necessity to seek ordination as priests. Undoubtedly with the goal of concluding his studies at a renowned university—indeed the oldest in Europe, Sixtus moved to Bologna in 1485. On December 2 of that year he received the degree of doctor of civil and canon law. Despite his many academic, social, and economic advantages, Sixtus must have faced some initial difficulties in finding an adequate position. In a letter to Anton Kress he remarked that he had deliberately delayed his graduation for about one year, apparently not relishing the disgrace of returning home with a seemingly useless degree. Only after receiving an offer from the bishop of Freising for an undisclosed post, did he take his degree.

In 1490 his name appears in the record of the University in Ingolstadt, a new institution founded in 1472 by Ludwig IX of Wittelsbach-Landshut, the count of Lower Bavaria. Here Sixtus began a remarkable academic career. In but five years he moved through the academic ranks, assuming the first chair in canon law in 1495. In 1498, at age 28, he was elected rector of the university, an office that rotated among the faculties. Due to internal conflicts and rivalries in another faculty, he was asked by the count of Lower Bavaria to remain for a second term. Sixtus Tucher's salary rose sharply during these years. From a meager ten guilders—a sum not adequate for his support—it increased to more than one hundred guilders following his tenure as rector.

Sources on Tucher's reputation in Ingolstadt are fraught with contradictions. Anonymous letters were sent to the count of Lower Bavaria complaining about the adverse academic conditions at the university and requesting a formal inquiry. One of the two professors accused was Sixtus Tucher, who supposedly taught less than his predecessors although he drew the same salary, and who allegedly held no academic disputations with his students. Since the appointment of Sixtus Tucher had never been publicly announced, his call to a professorship had in fact been the cause of gossip within the university. Other sources, however, indicate that his lectures were very

popular and well-attended by the students. Johannes Rummel from Tyrol and other students who heard Tucher's lectures, left notes lauding his knowledge and eloquence as a teacher.

In addition to his instructional duties Sixtus Tucher also served as counsel to Count Georg of Wittelsbach, a post that provided valuable diplomatic experience. When the black death reached Ingolstadt in the summer of 1495, Sixtus Tucher fled to his hometown of Nuremberg, but he appears to have resumed his position in Ingolstadt after the epidemic subsided.

#### Speaker 1

Early in 1496, Lorenz Tucher, cousin of Sixtus Tucher, resigned from the position of provost at the church of St. Lorenz, and the city council sought a replacement. Although they never codified their expectations formally, the Nuremberg city council set two prerequisites for anyone aspiring to hold this post in either of the Nuremberg parish churches. First and foremost was the allegiance of the candidate to the city; second was a law degree. As a native son with roots in many of the forty-some families that constituted the Nuremberg patriciate and with a degree in civil and canon law, Sixtus Tucher proved to be the ideal man for the job.

Lorenz Tucher may have suggested his cousin Sixtus to the city council as his successor, a recommendation undoubtedly backed by the influential Tucher family. The lobbying potential among family members in filling positions cannot be overestimated: In the case of Lorenz himself, a private letter written by three Tucher family members survives from 1478. Berthold, Anton II, and Hans Tucher wrote to the unsuspecting Lorenz telling him that they had "set all their hands and feet in motion" vouching for him to the city council and assuring them that he would accept the post if it were offered.

Sixtus was elected by the city council in March and inducted into office in August of 1496, although he was not actually ordained as priest until September and not in Bamberg, but Freising. Following his cousin Lorenz, Sixtus also became canon of the cathedral chapter in Regensburg, a position of higher rank within the late-medieval ecclesiastical hierarchy. In fact, Sixtus needed formal permission from the chapter to hold the provostship in Nuremberg simultaneously, since canon law officially forbade holding more than one office. The close ties that the city council and the churches of Nuremberg had established with the diocese of Regensburg over the years offered protection for the provost of St. Lorenz.

For some time, the relationship between the Nuremberg city council and the Bamberg bishop had been less than cordial. Bamberg had attempted to exercise control in Nuremberg by installing loyal cathedral canons as provosts in the two parishes. However, canon law actually stipulated episcopal authority for the even numbered months and papal authority for the odd. But in 1474, Pope Sixtus IV had deferred to the Nuremberg city council, the papal right to fill vacant parish positions during the so-called papal months. According to the new regulation, not

the pope, but the highest ranking cleric in Nuremberg, the abbot of the Benedictine monastery of St. Egidien, was authorized to approve these nominations. This granted increased autonomy to Nuremberg. If, however, the provostship became vacant during a so-called episcopal month, the Bamberg bishop could still appoint the candidate. It is believed that Lorenz Tucher vacated his post through resignation rather than to risk dying during an episcopal month.

#### Speaker 2

As provost of St. Lorenz, Sixtus Tucher was the head of a community of curates who lived together in the large parish rectory to the south of the church. He likewise supervised the school of St. Lorenz housed in a red sandstone building to the north of the church. Although responsibilities for the daily routines and cyclical rituals of the liturgy, including the singing or saying of masses and offices, as well as administering the sacraments were assumed by the other members of this community, the provost was required to participate when present and to celebrate mass on the highest feast days. Many of his efforts, however, were focused on his roles outside, acting as general counsel for the city, composing legal briefs, and negotiating the interests of the parish and city. In addition to his role as advocate for the city, Sixtus Tucher gave legal advice to Emperor Maximilian, who commissioned him to explore diplomatic channels toward ending the war raging in northern Italy between the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of France.

#### Speaker 1

Despite Tucher's many administrative responsibilities and far-reaching diplomatic endeavors, when Christoph Scheurl, who was Sixtus Tucher's nephew, compiled the vita in the family chronicle, he praised Sixtus above all for his skills as a pastor. This extended to his close ties with the nuns at St. Klara, the Nuremberg monastery of the Poor Clares. Forty pastoral letters that Tucher addressed to the famous abbess Caritas Pirckheimer and to his cousin, the prioress Appolonia Tucher, were translated from the original Latin into German by Christoph Scheurl and published in the year 1515. In one of the letters, he attempts to console Caritas upon the death of her father Johannes Pirckheimer, Sixtus exhorts her not to cry, asserting – according to an interpretation he attributes to Saint Jerome – Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus, not because he was grieving at the loss of a friend, but because he knew he would have to bring Lazarus back to life for the salvation of others.

Since his days at Italian universities, Sixtus Tucher had maintained an interest in humanism and sought the company of other humanists. In Nuremberg the circle of like-minded intellectuals included clerics, lawyers, and doctors. Among its prominent members were the councilman, independent scholar, and freethinker Willibald Pirckheimer, the physician and entrepreneur Hartmann Schedel, and the artist Albrecht Dürer. Sixtus was especially influenced by the new

interpretations of classical texts proposed by humanist scholars, many of which became available for the first time in Latin editions. He felt a particular affinity toward Saint Augustine, who – as a philosopher schooled in the Platonic tradition – strove to accommodate and explicate Christian doctrine and had thus reconciled Christianity with the philosophical systems of classical antiquity. Tucher likewise felt a kinship with another of the church fathers, Saint Jerome, whom he perceived as an exemplary Christian teacher.

#### Speaker 2

Surprisingly, after but a few short years in office, Sixtus Tucher, who was only in his early forties, approached the city council and asked to be released from his duties as provost of St. Lorenz. Failing health may have been the reason. Scheurl reports that Tucher suffered from tuberculosis.

Tucher may have felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of responsibilities bearing down on his shoulders, or he may have wished to use his remaining time and energy to concentrate on those matters he deemed most important, and which he recognized as his special calling. Public preaching may not have been his forte. In a letter he wrote to Appolonia Tucher at St. Klara, Sixtus voices concerns about his personal limitations and weaknesses, along with his resulting inhibitions. He confides that he knows it to be the duty of a priest to spread the word of God to the parishioners; but, in Nuremberg, where he must preach to an educated audience, he fears being ridiculed when he stammers.

The letters and other records he left behind attest to his love of the arts and liturgy, as well as his ongoing interest in pastoral care, especially the so-called *cura monialium*, which is evident in his close ties with the Poor Clares in Nuremberg. These connections were maintained through individual counseling, particularly with spiritual advice given in written missives. Early in 1503 [January 23] Sixtus also acquired a benefice at the St. Mary Alter [Gross`sche Messe] of the monastery of St. Klara, which provided him with some additional income.

Then in March of the same year his cousin Lorenz dies, and Sixtus succeeded him in the influential yet burdensome post of custodian of the cathedral of Regensburg. Lorenz had in fact moved to Regensburg in order to devote more of his time and attention to these duties, a job that was financially backed by a significant salary. The canon holding this position was formally responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of one of the largest Gothic church buildings in southern Germany, its furnishings, and the interface between the material objects and the performance of the liturgy. By contrast, the responsibility for the edifice of St. Lorenz and its furnishings rested primarily on the shoulders of the lay appointees of the city council, the church trustee and the church master, since the parochial property of the Nuremberg churches, the so-called *fabrica ecclesiae*, was under the full control and ownership of the city.

### Speaker 1

During the period leading to his resignation, Sixtus commissioned liturgy and purchased works of sacred architecture and art in Nuremberg. In 1501, Sixtus established a mass for St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, a feast celebrated annually with great fanfare in St. Lorenz at the altar dedicated to the Four Church Fathers. The donation charter containing detailed instructions is still preserved, and demonstrates that the saint was honored with all the pomp otherwise reserved for the church's patron saints. A special mass formula was prescribed, which was also adopted in the church of St. Sebald. To guarantee that his new feast, which was not in the diocesan calendar, was celebrated correctly, a printed leaflet with the liturgical texts was added to the missals used in both parishes. The new mass formulas for St. Monica's day were later integrated in the Geese Book.

In 1504, Sixtus, together with his sister Magdalena Reich, instituted a daily mass in the church of St. Lorenz, to be celebrated at the St. John Altar. This donation benefited the parishioners, who here had a daily opportunity to partake of the Eucharist. Sixtus and Magdalena were mentioned in the collect as donors. The endowment for this donation produced 60 guilders interest per annum. From this sum, 36 guilders provided the salary for an additional curate who joined the St. Lorenz collegium. This generous donation thus increased the clerical personnel who served the church.

Together with his brother Anton II, Sixtus Tucher introduced an endowment to support a prebendary to care for the spiritual needs of the elderly and infirm in the Holy Ghost Hospital in Nuremberg. Among other responsibilities, he was to say four masses per week and to teach about the saints on their feast days.

### Speaker 2

Sixtus Tucher likewise donated two objects that appear in the inventory compiled for the St. Lorenz treasury in 1512: "a round gilt pacem ornamented with pearls and precious stones" and "a red velvet corporal burse bearing images of Saint Lawrence and Saint Sixtus, rendered as raised appliqué, and with four buttons of pearl." In the latter case Sixtus chose to venerate his own name saint and the titular saint of his parish.

Although liturgical donations seem to have consumed the larger portion of Sixtus Tucher's "disposable capital," charitable donations likewise benefited from his largess. In 1504, Sixtus subsidized an endowment through which ten poor women and ten poor men of Nuremberg were given cloth annually on All Saints Day. Sixtus stipulated that the selection of the needy poor was to be done by the two eldest wives or widows in the Tucher family since "women – more so than

men – are drawn to works of compassion, recognize the afflictions of the poor, and take them to heart.”

Although it must have been clear to the aldermen that Sixtus’s resignation could not be denied, it took considerable time to take effect: All the details had to be negotiated and confirmed between Nuremberg and Rome, and a successor had to be found. Again, any interference from the bishop of Bamberg was to be forestalled. The official resignation of Sixtus Tucher was finally acknowledged by Pope Julius II on 16 January 1504.

#### Speaker 1

The planning, building, and furnishing of a private residence for his last years consumed significant time and resources. Christoph Scheurl mentions it in his description of Sixtus Tucher’s transition to retirement:

#### Speaker 2

“[...] on Easter in the year 1504, as Herr Anton Kress, a young scholar and doctor of law, took over the provostship, Sixtus Tucher moved into his garden house, which he had built with a walkway connecting it to the Carthusian Monastery. He desired to withdraw from the world and to spend the rest of his life reading the Holy Scripture and especially the books of Saint Jerome, which he cherished. Further he wished to celebrate mass, to meditate, and to serve God.”

The residence was situated at the edge of the old town of Nuremberg, next to the city wall and across the street from the Carthusians, where he could attend mass or the canonical hours by crossing the wooden footbridge he had erected. A pre-dieu from the house survives today in a Tucher family collection. A drawing of the interior of the chapel in the residence shows an array of stained glass windows.

#### Speaker 1

The most famous stained glass from the house must have been installed in a study or parlor. A pair of trefoils based on drawings by Albrecht Dürer and executed by the famed Nuremberg Hirsvogel glass workshop, show Death on Horseback confronting Sixtus Tucher, who stands at an open grave. In the inscription, Death exhorts: “Beware unfortunate one, lest I place you, pierced by my arrow, on the ugly bed of this bier.” [Cave miser, ne meo te confixvm. Telo. In hoc tetr(ic)o collocem feretri lecto] To which Tucher responds: “What are you dispatching, since I cannot avoid this warning grave, even if you wish it.” [Quid mi(ttis qu)od. Hoc monente, espvlcro: eciam. Si velis. Cavere. Neqveo] The small panels present a reversal of the usual arrangement of the Dance of Death in which the individual struggles against Death’s unwelcome aggressive advances. In contrast to the humanist *memento mori* Tucher does not claim to overcome

Death through the deeds of this life. Here he faces the dilemma of finding the proper attitude toward death.

In his testament, Sixtus Tucher was especially concerned that his house and garden remain within the Tucher family. For this purpose he instituted a *fideicommissum* that allowed future heirs the use of the property but forbade its sale and set strict guidelines for future bequests. The heirs were to arrange for five masses to be read at the altar in the house chapel: The first for the Holy Trinity, the second for Our Lady, the third for All Saints, the fourth for All Souls, and the fifth for Sixtus Tucher. Since the altar was not consecrated, the heirs had to obtain a special dispensation in Rome to fulfill these requirements.

Sixtus Tucher had expanded and renewed the liturgy, he had donated sacred art for various lay communities, he was concerned with pastoral responsibilities, and he identified with the parish of St. Lorenz. Therefore we might expect him to have initiated the lavishly illuminated, two-volume gradual that came to be known as the Geese Book.

Sixtus Tucher lived to see the completion of the first volume of the Geese Book. He died on 24 October 1507 and was interred in the family crypt in the church of St. Sebald. Christoph Scheurl records his last words: "I have sinned against God and St. Lawrence." This humility topos stressing the imperfection of humankind, points to the Christian belief in the immensity of divine grace, and documents the close bond he felt with the parish of St. Lorenz.

## 10 Jakob Elsner

### Speaker 1

It is remarkable that the name of the artist who produced the elaborate and enigmatic illuminations, including that of the choir of Geese, is not recorded in the colophons. Generally art historians have agreed that Jakob Elsner of Nuremberg illuminated the book. But Jakob Elsner remains a mysterious artistic personality. Johann Neudörfer, who wrote one of the earliest collections of artists' biographies, commented on his talents and his circle of friends. Compiled in the year 1547, Neudörfer's treatise records:

### Speaker 2

“The honorable citizens of Nuremberg found Elsner to be a very pleasant man. He was good at playing the lute, which was valued by the great organists, Sebastian Imhoff, Wilhelm Haller, and Lorenz Staiber. They gathered around him with their friends every day. He painted portraits of the honorable of Nuremberg, he illuminated beautiful books for them, and, as an emblazoner, he painted the coats of arms that had been granted to them by emperors and kings. At this time no one was here who was able to execute painted gold as pure as he.”

### Speaker 1

The sources for Elsner are sparse, the number of authenticated works is very limited and consequently, since art historians have not been able to establish a clear picture of his painting style, no body of works is universally acknowledged as his oeuvre. Perhaps this will never be possible.

No document informs us about the birth of Jakob Elsner, but the registry of the church of St. Sebald records that the death knell was sounded for him in the period following Pentecost in the year 1517. Jakob was not the only artist in his family. His brother Lorenz, who died in 1503, is likewise called an illuminator in this registry. An entry in the Nuremberg court records informs us that a person with the name Elsner lived on St. Egidien Square. Here at the center of Nuremberg's graphic industry, the print shop of Anton Koberger operated as many as twenty-four presses. This location was ideal for an emblazoner who – according to Neudörfer – produced coats of arms for the patricians.

### Speaker 2

Hartmann Schedel, famous for writing the well-known Nuremberg Chronicle, commissioned Elsner to emblazon a manuscript with his coat of arms in 1503. Schedel himself tells the story on

a piece of paper that was glued into the book. While visiting the library of the Augustinian monastery in Nuremberg, Schedel found a 14<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript containing texts believed to be authored by the physician Galen. The condition of the book was appalling; it even emitted a foul stench. Schedel negotiated with the prior and was able to purchase the manuscript for eight guilders. Subsequently he had it cleaned and bound, and through Elsner he made it his own. Schedel writes: "I had Elsner paint the angel with my coat of arms."

Only one signed manuscript by Jakob Elsner is known, the festival missal for Provost Anton Kress. In large letters, on an empty page preceding the mass canon the artist recorded proudly for posterity: "Jakob Elsner, citizen of Nuremberg, illuminated this book in the year 1513." In many respects the illuminations in this missal surpass those of all other Nuremberg manuscripts of the period. Even beyond Nuremberg few manuscript illuminations can compare with those of the Kress Missal.

A portrait of a well-dressed young man, today in the collections of the German National Museum, poses many questions regarding Elsner. In a text on the reverse side of the panel Jörg Ketzler informs posterity that he had himself portrayed by Jakob Elsner at the age of twenty-eight. In comparison with the high artistic quality of the Kress Missal, the rather mediocre execution of the portrait seems disappointing. The question arises if both works could have originated with the same artist. In the Kress Missal, Elsner showed himself able to paint the minutest details, perfect proportions and subtle nuances in color. Over the years many other manuscripts and panel paintings have been attributed and de-attributed to Jakob Elsner.

Evidence of Elsner's work as illuminator of manuscripts can also be found in the account books of Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony. In 1505 and 1507, Frederic paid Elsner to illuminate two books. In one case he must have assumed the role of general contractor. In 1509 Anton Tucher, member of the inner city council and brother of Sixtus Tucher, wrote to Frederick the Wise that the books he had ordered from Elsner had been completed and that – in his opinion – Frederick would be pleased with the result.

#### Speaker 1

Even though Elsner was recognized for his work beyond the walls of Nuremberg and his profession provided him with income, his personal financial situation seems to have been dire – at least this is the impression left by entries in the Nuremberg court records. Already in 1490, debts appear for Jakob and his two brothers, Lorenz and Hans. By 1513, an additional debt of thirty-nine guilders has accrued, and it is evident that the Elsner brothers are unable to pay.

### Speaker 2

Another claim by the city of Nuremberg may shed light on the person of Jakob Elsner and his proclivities. In 1507 records show a tax liability of two guilders on beer and wine, which Elsner is forced to pay. If we calculate the quantities of alcoholic beverages on which such a tax would have been imposed, we reach astonishing results. Had Elsner opted for domestic beer then he would have purchased a quantity of approximately 450 gallons. Had he favored Franconian wine then he could have obtained roughly half of this quantity. In the case of expensive wines imported from Italy or other Mediterranean countries the amount would have been significantly smaller but still substantial – ranging from 50 to 80 gallons. Unfortunately the records do not tell us how long these back taxes had accrued.

### Speaker 1

When were the illuminations in the Geese Book first attributed to Elsner? In 1854 the retired army officer, amateur historian, and art connoisseur Ralf von Rettberg wrote a book about art monuments including the few surviving examples of Nuremberg manuscript illumination. One of the examples mentioned was a choir book from the sacristy of St. Lorenz. For Rettberg the importance of the book was based less on its artistic quality than on its uniqueness. Familiar with the missal of Anton Kress, at this time in the possession of the Kress family, Rettberg compared the books and attributed the illuminations of the Geese Book to Jakob Elsner.

It does not seem possible to gain a clearly consistent and homogeneous image of Jakob Elsner or his work. The fragmentary evidence suggests a short but brilliant career which was possibly cut short by personal problems – perhaps debts and/or alcohol. He was well-known as emblazoner and portraitist. He, like his brother, also worked as an illuminator, but it is not known from whom he learned this trade. With the Kress Missal he created one of the most prominent examples of manuscript painting from the late Middle Ages. The high quality illuminations in the Geese Book would have been his largest commission and left his grandest legacy.