

**THE MIDDLE LOW GERMAN
VERSION OF THE LEGEND
OF MARY MAGDALEN,
VOL. IV. NO. 2, PP. 132-215**

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The Middle Low German Version of the Legend of Mary Magdalen, Vol. IV. No. 2, pp. 132-215
by Carl Edgar Eggert

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The University of Chicago.

FOUNDED BY JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER.

THE MIDDLE LOW GERMAN VERSION
OF
THE LEGEND OF MARY MAGDALEN.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTIES OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOLS OF ARTS,
LITERATURE AND SCIENCE,
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.
(*Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures.*)

BY
CARL EDGAR EGGERT.

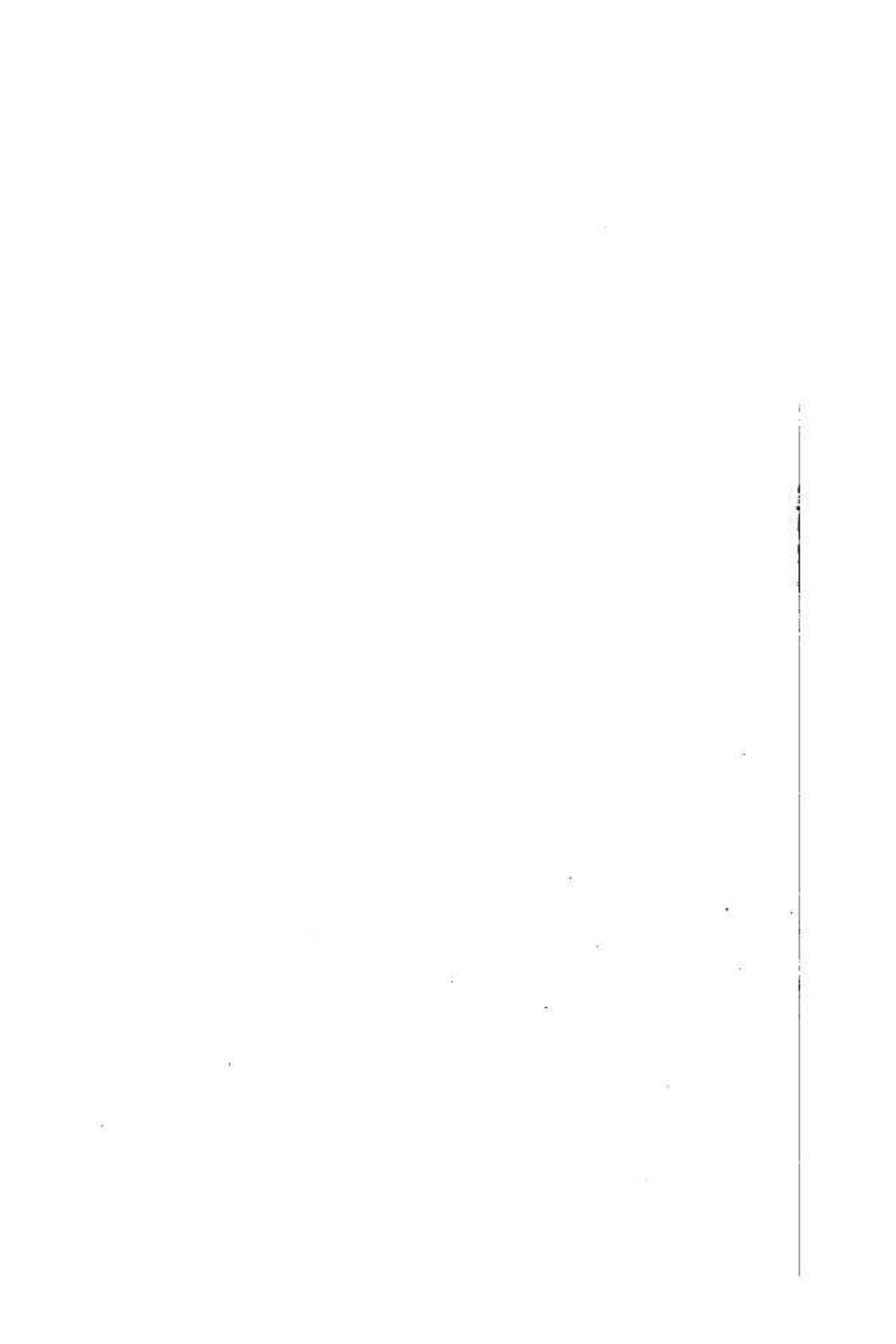
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THE MIDDLE LOW GERMAN VERSION OF THE LEGEND OF MARY MAGDALEN.

PART I.

ONE of the most widespread Christian legends of the Middle Ages is that of Mary Magdalen and her fabulous apostolate in Provence of which she is the titular saint. Among the German versions or adaptations of the story is that found on folia 60^b to 73^a of Helmstedt Codex 894 bearing the date 1449 A. D., written in Middle Low German, and at present in the ducal library at Wolfenbuettel, Germany. For the material and literature upon this subject I am mainly indebted to the kindness of Professor H. Schmidt-Wartenberg in putting his copies of the manuscripts at my disposal, and to whom I hereby extend my sincere gratitude.

The following is the description of the only extant MS. of this version according to Heinemann, *Handschriften der Bibliothek zu Wolfenbuettel*, 1^{er} Abt. Bd. 2. p. 287:

894. Helmst. Pap. 21 x 14½ cm. 257 Bl. 15. Jahrh. (1449),
von zwei verschiedenen Händen. Zum Theil mit rothen
Überschriften und Anfangsbuchstaben.

Enthält:

- 1) f. 1-55'. Het leve Christi. *In plattdeutschen Versen.*
 - 2) f. 56-60'. Van dem dische im Himmelrike.
 - *3) f. 60'-73. Van sunte Maria Magdalenen.*
 - 4) f. 73-89. Vnser frowen claghe.
 - 5) f. 89'-91. De dochtere der seven dotsuenden unde seven howetdogheden.
 - 6) f. 91'-93'. De seven ghawe des hilgen geystes.
 - 7) f. 95-209'. Bruder Philipps des Karthäusers Marienleben. *Plattdeutsch.* „Dit bok het sunte Marien levent.“ *Andere Handschriften 1039 und Aug. 18. 21. 1. (4) (die letztere oberdeutsch). Herausgegeben von Heinrich Rückert (Quedlinburg, 1853).*
 - 8) f. 211-254. (*von der zweiten Hand*). Sunte Elizabeten passie.
 - 9) f. 254-257. De seven dagetide.
Prov. u. Gesch.:
- Ebd. *Holzdeckel mit roth gefärbtem gepresstem Leder überzogen;*

die Schleisser sind abgerissen. Auf dem Vorsatzblatte steht die kurze Inhaltsangabe: Van den dogheden vnde van der kyntheyt unses heren, vnde van sunten Ilseben leuen.

Our version recites in 800 lines, riming in pairs, that part of the life of M. M. dealing with her departure with Maximinus, Lazarus, Martha and others of the seventy two apostles from the Holy Land; their miraculous voyage to, and arrival at, Marseilles; the distress and want of the apostles relieved after the third nocturnal appearance of the disembodied Mary before the royal or princely couple of the country; the latter's resulting voyage to Palestine with the storm at sea causing the death of the mother in childbirth; the miraculous preservation of mother and son on the rocky isle; the prince's stay of two years with St. Peter in Palestine; his return and reunion with wife and child resulting in the conversion of his land and the appointment of the two bishops.

PART II.

With the mass of dogmatic literature discussing the identity of the adulterous Mary with her who anointed Christ's feet with the costly ointment and with the Mary present at the crucifixion; with the stoutly affirmed, and just so stoutly denied voyage of M. M. to Provence and her life of thirty years in the wilderness, this study has nothing to do. The prevalent Catholic view may be found in the *Acta Sanctorum (Bollandistorum)* of July 22, vol. V. 218 ff. A concise life of M. M. by *Ludwig Clarus*, Regensburg 1852, is based on the able and compendious work of the Abbé M. Faillon, *Monuments inédits sur l'apostolat de Ste. M. M. en Provence etc.* Paris 1847 and 1865.

On pages 155-6 of vol. 31 of the *Series Latina* of Migne's *Patrologia*, Paris 1867, occurs the following entry for the year 43 A. D. in the *Chronicon* of Flavius Lucius Dexter, a Spanish ecclesiastic, who was alive between 368 and 430: "Hierosolymitani Judaei vehementer infensi Beato Lazaro, Magdalenae, Marthae, Marcellae, Maximino, Josepho ab Arimathia, nobili decurioni, et aliis plurimis; navi sine remigio velisque ac sine gubernatore eos imponunt et exulare mandant. Qui per varium mare divinitus delati ad Massiliensem portum incolumes appellant."

Faillon, followed by Dr. Otto Knörk, cannot find any earlier reference than the life of M. M. set by him in the sixth, or possibly fifth, century, that is a hundred years later than the entry of Dex-

ter. The death of M. M. is also recorded by Dexter, to be found in the same volume of the *Patrologia* p. 255-6. The tradition would seem then to be established in the *fourth* century in Provence as well as in Spain.

The successor of the very brief "first life" cited by Faillon, is a longer anonymous one, printed on pages (columns) 437-446 of volume II of the *Monuments etc.* This would seem to be a source of the work by Rabanus Maurus (776-856) "*de vita beatae M. M. et sororis eius sanctae Marthae*" which may be found in vol. 112 *S. L.* of Migne's *Patrologia* and in Faillon II, col. 453 ff. As this author attempted to sift out the many interpolations which he regarded as spurious, it is the nearest approach to a plausible account, fortified by apparent erudition and criticism, to be found before the work of Launoy.

Next in point of time comes the life by Saint Odon, abbot of Cluny in the tenth century, followed by that of one Josbertus, an unknown author of the tenth century, who concludes his account with a "*stupendum miraculum*," the origin of our composition. See Faillon II. 575 ff. Unfortunately he does not print the story of the Prince of Marseilles. This is the oldest extant account of the conversion of the prince of Marseilles, who appears there merely as a rich private citizen. This story gained wide currency at the time of the Crusades and later and may be found in the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais (1240-50), in the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus a Voragine (1260-76), in the *Speculum Sanctorale* of Bernardus Guidonis (13th cent.) and in a life of M. M. by Cardinal Cabassole (13th c.) as well as in countless poetical versions in the popular tongues. As the first of these authors claims in the 107th chapter of the *Sp. H.* to have derived his material from the *Gesta Marthae* and the *Gesta Mariae Magdalenae*, these must be the titles of compilations of the various lives of these two sister saints, the one by a pretended Synthex, the latter by an unknown hand. This unknown "editor" is thought by Faillon, Clarus and Knörk to have lived during the early Crusades when the custom of wearing the cross as the emblem of those who fought for the Holy Sepulchre attained its chief significance. (See lines 438-9 and 590-2 of the text.) The *Gesta* as reported by Vincent and Jacob contain the final form of the medieval life of M. M., although they vary slightly in different copies of perhaps

the original MS. Though Dr. Pierce Butler in his dissertation *Legenda Aurea--Légende Dorée--Golden Legend*, Baltimore 1899, page 7, is undoubtedly right in saying that the *Legenda Aurea* is largely compiled from Vincent's older *Sp. H.*, it is just as certain that Jacob may have used copies of those same *Gesta* used by Vincent. From internal evidence, I think he did. And even though the thesis can be maintained that nearly all the extant "belletristic" versions of the life of M. M. are derivable from either the *Sp. H.* or the *L. A.*, it is not positive that these authors may not have used other versions of the same lost original. It is certain, that the poem of Guillaume le Clerc of Normandie antedates either of these sources. A similar idea is expressed by Dr. C. Horstmann on p. VIII of the Introduction to the *Early South English Legendary or Lives of Saints*.

Vincent does not mention Cedonius (John IX. 1, f); Jacob does. Neither is quoted in Migne's *Patrologia*, but in his commentary on Dexter's *Chronicon*, P. Franciscus Bevarius (17th century) cites Petrus de Natalibus (bishop of Equilio in the 14th century) in substantiation of Dexter's entries. Migne 31, p. 155. He also says: *His addit Celidonium, seu Cedonium*. P. de N. *Cat. Sanct.* cap. 102. This seems to indicate that Vincent and Jacobus are not regarded as ecclesiastical authorities while Petrus de N. is. Did he perhaps use better authorities than the former?

The final content of the story is to be found in both Vincent de Beauvais and Jacobus a Voragine. Later poets may expand a *praedicans* into a long winded sermon as does ours of Helm. Codex 894, or keep the *pelegrin* weeping and wailing *ad nauseam* as does he of Berliner Codex 245, nothing is added to increase or even vary the tradition. In the *Speculum Historiale* the essential part of the story is to be found in book X, chapter 94 the last sentence, continuing through to chapter 99, excepting a few lines at the end of chapter 98. In Graesse's Breslau edition of 1890 of the *Legenda Aurea* the corresponding story is on pages 409-413. While agreeing almost to identity of language the following discrepancies must be noted. The passages to be cited from the *Sp. H.* either do not occur in the *L. A.* or else are materially different from the corresponding.

1) On arriving at Massilia: *Et egredientes navim villam ingressi sunt .*