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Psalter (use of Fontevrault), *Psalterium ordinatum per ferias secundum usum ordines Fontisebraldi*, with manuscript additions

In Latin, illuminated and hand-colored printed Psalter on paper
[Paris, Yolande Bonhomme for Thielman Kerver, 1546]

In-8, 162 folios in all, 112 folios for the first psalter (folios 113-126 missing, beginning with the end of the litany, missing already at the moment of binding because the catchwords indicate no break), 4 folios (ff. 127-130 for the common of the Fontevrault Breviary, and 39 folios for the Psalter of the Virgin (numbered 2 to 39, the first folio lacking), 1 folio of the antiphon of the Conception of the Virgin, printed foliation, 6 manuscript folios added at the end contemporary with the work and containing prayers for the dead, 30 long lines per page, quire signatures, ruled in light red ink, rubrics and headings printed in red ink, numerous initials of gold and silver on colored grounds (red, blue, green), some initials in red or blue on silver grounds, profuse line endings of floral and geometric motifs in blue, red, and green completing the ornamentation of the text (ALL EXECUTED WITH STENCILS), colophon at end of text, printed in red and black ink. EXQUISITE PARISIAN CONTEMPORARY SEMÉ BINDING of brown morocco over pasteboards, covers decorated with semé of fleur-de-lys, crown of foliage in the center gilt, frame of triple gold fillets, smooth spine with gilt semé of fleurs-de-lys, single gold fillet on the borders, edges gilt, clasps of copper with attaches of velvet (modern), box of blue morocco signed Lortic, title and date on spine (1547 [sic]) (binding end of the sixteenth century, close to those by the Eve Bindery for Henri III and later Henri IV. See Hobson, 1994, n°62 and Mazal, 1970, n°127). Dimensions 160 x 105 mm.

In an important rare binding, with manuscript additions and extensive handwork, including many hundreds of stencils, this Psalter survives as the only copy known of the use of the Benedictines of the Abbey of Fontevrault. The Archives départementales of Maine-et-Loire possess no copy of this exemplar although they have important holdings of works related to Fontevrault. This in part is explained by the disappearance of the major portion of this library. When the books were transferred by boat to Paris during the Revolution, the boat was shipwrecked and nothing was saved. The stencils and multi-colored illuminated initials further enhance the importance of this remarkably rare hybrid book from the first century of printing.

PROVENANCE

1. Unica printed copy for the Abbey of Fontevrault with colophon in red and black at end of text: "Finis psalterii intemerate Virginis Marie a beato Bonaventura editi impressique Parisiis, per Yolandam Bonhomme, viduam spectabilis viri Thielmanni Kerver commorantem ad signum unicornis in magno vico sancti Jacobi anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo sexto [1546], die autem .xiii. mensis aprilis." Yolande Bonhomme, widow of Thielman Kerver, printed liturgical texts for many female convents such as the *Horae* for the Dominicans in Paris (1529, 1542, 1554) (see Moreau, III, 1792). She headed the Kerver workshop "à la licorne" between 1522 to 1557, most often under her the name of her first husband, printer Pasquier Bonhomme (see Renouard, 1965, p. 45). Interestingly, she was also responsible for printing all liturgical texts for the Abbey of Fontevrault. Also recorded in the Prince of Bourbon Parme's collection for the use of Fontevrault are the following: *Breviarium* (Paris, Yolande Bonhomme, 1545), *Horae* (Paris, Yolande Bonhomme, 1546), *Orationes devote* (Paris, Yolande Bonhomme, 1546), *Commendationes defunctorum officium* (Paris, Yolande Bonhomme, 1554) (see Alès, pp. 468-469). Ten years after the first edition of the Fontevrault edition, Yolande Bonhomme published a second edition, also recorded by Bohatta in his survey of the Duke of Parma's liturgical books: *Psalterium Fontebraldense*, Paris, Yolande Bonhomme, 1554 (Bohatta, 1910, n° 509): the single copy of the 1554 edition is in Lille, Mediathèque Jean Lévy. Founded in the twelfth century in the valley of Fontevraud, the mother house and the order became one of the most powerful double monastic orders in France. Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard the Lionheart, Henry II are all buried there. The present Psalter dates from the period of spiritual reform and artistic renovation, overseen by three remarkable abbesses from the Bourbon family.
2. Charles-Louis de Bourbon, his bookplate pasted on front pastedown: "Bibliothèque liturgique de S. A. R. Charles-Louis de Bourbon, comte de Villafranca, no. 291 [507]" (see Bohatta, 1910, n° 507). A unica of the Duke of Bourbon-Parma: sold at sale, lot no. 320, 1 June 1932 (see Sale's catalogue, 1932). The duke of Bourbon-Parma (1799-1883) became king of Etruria under the regency of his mother Marie-Louise. In 1849, he abdicated in favor of his son and retired to his chateau in Wisdrupp in Saxony in order to focus exclusively on his books. He assembled one of the most beautiful private collections of liturgical books from the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. According to his bibliographer, Hanns Bohatta, among the 606 works which were in his library, a certain number of them were unica. This copy is described by Alès, n° 291. Extremely rare, we have found only one other copy at the BnF (Paris), shelfmark B-27798. However, this copy contains only the *Psalterium intemerate Dei genitricis Virginis Marie, a beato Bonaventura doctore seraphico editum*, and the Yolande Bonhomme 1546 colophon (40 ff).
3. Roguet, collector: his bookplate pasted on front pastedown.

TEXT

ff. 1-112 [-127], Psalter, use of Fontevrault; rubric: *Psalterium ordinatum per ferias secundum usum ordinis Fontisebraldi. Et prima feria secunda. Ad primam, psalmus primus*; explicit: "Psalterium secundum usum ordinis Fontisebraldi feliciter explicit" (lacking ff. 113-126v);

ff. 127-130v, Excerpts from Breviary (Common), use of Fontevrault; rubric: *Diebus ferialibus quadragesime post orationem secundi nocturni pius prostratus*; explicit: "...patientia autem probationem probatio vero spes. Spes autem..." (lacks ending);

ff. 2-39, Psalter for the Virgin; heading: *Psalterium beate Marie*; incipit: "Aperi domina os meum ad laudandum..."; explicit: "Finis psalterii Virginis Marie" (lacking first folio);

ff. 39v-40 (non foliated), Antiphon of the Conception of the Virgin; rubric: *Psalterium. Sequitur antiphona de conceptione beate Marie Virginis*; explicit and colophon: "Finis psalterii intemerate Virginis Marie a beato Bonaventura editi impressique Parisiis, per Yolandum Bonhomme, viduam spectabilis viri Thielmanni Kerver commorantem ad signum unicornis in magno vico sancti Jacobi anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo sexto [1546], die autem .xiii. mensis aprilis";

ff. 41-46, Added Prayers for the Dead, manuscript; rubric: *Sequitur commendatio anime defuncte. Chorus dicat. Responsorium*; incipit: "Subvenite sancti Dei occurrere angeli Domini suscipientes...".

LITERATURE

Alès, Anatole. *Description des livres de liturgie imprimés aux XVe et XVIe siècles faisant partie de la bibliothèque de S. A. R. Mgr. Charles-Louis de Bourbon*, Paris, A. Hennuyer, 1878-1884, no. 291.

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[Bonhomme Yolande ed.] *Orationes devote, partim selecte et emendate, partim recens composite: pro sanctimonialibus et feminis devotis (ord. Fontisebraldi)*, Parisiis, in officina Iolande Bonhomme, vidue calcographi Thielmanni Kerver, 1546 [ces heures fort rares, à l'usage de Fontevrault, contiennent deux grandes planches gravées et 39 petites; les armes de l'Abbaye sont gravées en bois sur le titre].

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Online resources:

www.abbaye-fontevraud.com