

LES ENLUMINURES

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Prayers

In French, with a few Latin phrases, imprint on paper

France, (Lyons?), c. 1530

ii (modern paper) + 8 + iii (modern paper), on paper, deckle edges, no discernible watermark, chain lines are horizontal, distance between the chain lines, c. 33 mm., one quire of 8 leaves, complete, signed in the first half of the quire, first leaf (the title page is unsigned): [A i] Aii Aiii Aiv, 24 long lines of gothic type face (justification 95 x 63 mm.), three 3-line woodblock initials with dark backgrounds, two larger (7-line and on the title page) woodblock initials, fleur de lys tail piece (Aviii verso), three woodcut illustrations, title page (virgin and child), and ff. A i verso, and A iii verso, paper somewhat darkened, but in good condition. Nineteenth-century quarter binding of leather and marbled paper, slightly rubbed, but good condition. Dimensions c. 130-127 x 90-82 mm.

This fascinating, modest imprint – in a single quire illustrated with woodcuts – contains a collection of prayers in French. Perhaps for a clientele who could not afford a more luxurious, expensive Book of Hours, this tiny pamphlet excerpts the most central Marian prayers from an Horae and illustrates them with simple woodcuts featuring the Virgin. Almost certainly the only surviving copy of this imprint, the little volume evokes printed ephemera that is rarely documented and seldom studied.

PROVENANCE

1. This small volume is undated, and without indication of the location or printer; comparisons suggest Lyons, c. 1530 seems likely, although Paris is certainly also a possibility; further study is called for.
2. Inside front cover, in pencil, "50" circled; "27409"; "Obsecro"; and another modern owner's or seller's note, now erased;
3. Various booksellers's notes testify to its presence in the sale rooms in the nineteenth century: back flyleaf f. i, in pencil, "70987259"; inside back cover in pencil, "60359257," and "J 57" in red (with a couple of erased notes).
4. A previous description stated this was likely the Revoil copy, *Catalogue de livres anciens...de M. le Chevalier Revoil*, Paris, 1834, lot 37, described in the catalogue as *dos de mar. non. r.* (unverified).
5. This edition (and possibly this copy?), recorded in Brunet, *Supplément* (1880), col. 54 and 1094 as Labitte, 1876, and Morgand et Fatout, *Répertoire de la Librairie Morgand et Fatout*, Paris, 1878, p. 6, no. 39; listed in a number of Morgand catalogues: see Libraire Damascène Morgand Paris, *Répertoire Méthodique de la librairie Damascène Morgand*, Prem. Partie, Paris, 1893, p. 40, no. 210; *Damascène Morgand: Librairie de la Société des Bibliophiles François*. Paris: Passage des Panoramas, 55, 1893, (described in the catalogue as *non rogné*), *Bulletin mensuel*, no. 49, February 1900, no. 40301.

6. Front flyleaf, f. i, bookplate of Cte Chandon de Briailles, with "no 290" in pencil, the bookplate of François Chandon de Briailles, one of the heirs to the of the collection of the Cte Raoul Chandon de Briailles (1850-1908). Part of this very large library was deposited in the Médiathèque at Épernay following his death, with the remainder passing to his heirs Henri and François, who continued to build the collection; their collection sold Paris, Tajan, November 25, 2003, December 17, 2003, April 8, 2004, and October 2, 2004, but this book apparently not included in these sales.

TEXT

f. A i, Title page, *Obsecro. | | O itemerata[sic] | | Co[n]ditor celi | | En francoys. | | Auec deux autres oraysons deuotes.* [20 x 18 mm. wood cut of Virgin and child]

ff. A i verso- A iii, *Sensuit obsecro en francoys*, incipit, "Ie te prie dame sainte Marie mere de dieu ...";

f. A iii verso, incipit, "Dieu qui as a[n]o[n]ciation du[n]g a[n]ge ...";

ff. A iii verso- A v verso, *O intemerata en francoys*, incipit, "O tres intermergine et par durable ...";

ff. A v verso-A vi, *Oraison tres deuote a nostre seigneur*, incipit, "Tres dieu createur du ciel ...";

ff. A vi [rubric]-A vii, *Protestation de la foy*, incipit, "Sire dieu ie q[ui] suis ...";

ff. A vii- Avii verso, *Orayson de nostre dame moust deuote*, incipit, "Glorieuse vierge marie./ A toy me rene et si te prie/ ...En disant aue maria, Amen."

Not included in Pettegree, *French Books* (Pettegree, Walsby, Wilkinson, 2007), USTC or BP16 (Online Resources); listed in Brunet, *Manuel du libraire*, Supplement, Paris 1880, col. 54 and 1094 (where it was dated c. 1540).

ILLUSTRATION

Three figurative woodcuts:

f. A i, [title page], Virgin and child, (20 x 18 mm.)

f. A i verso, Crowned Virgin standing, holding the Christ Child, in an arched frame made of rosary beads, all in a rectangular frame (43 x 36 mm.);

f. A iii verso, Crowned Virgin standing, holding the Christ Child, in an arched frame made of rosary beads, all in a rectangular frame (43 x 36 mm.);

The woodcuts on ff. A i and A iii verso that introduce the Marian prayers, "Obsecro te" and "O intemerata," are identical in size and subject, but are clearly produced from different blocks. The facial expression of the Virgin and her Child in the two are different; in the first cut they are smiling, in the second they are quite sad.

Small in format and in length (a single quire of eight leaves or sixteen pages), this very humble collection of prayers in French stands in marked contrast to contemporary printed Books of Hours. Numerous editions of heavily illustrated printed Books of Hours dominated the market in printed books made in France, in particular in Paris, in the later fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century. Printed Books of Hours as a genre varied widely in how luxurious they were, ranging from hand-painted copies on parchment which can rival illuminated manuscripts in their luxury, to much simpler copies on paper. But any printed Book of Hours, no matter how simple, would have been much more costly than this tiny pamphlet. The quality of the paper, the unrefined printing quality, and the rather simple woodcut illustrations are all typical of printed ephemera aimed at a new segment of the market. Given its size, and the fact that copies must have circulated without bindings, it is easy to understand how this could survive in what we believe is a single copy.

The contents of this little pamphlet are thus direct evidence of religious practice and belief within a level of society that is seldom documented. It is notable that all the prayers here are in French, in contrast to French Books of Hours that are still in both French and Latin in this period. The two Marian prayers, known by their opening words, the "Obsecro te" (I beseech thee) and "O intemerata" (O unspotted), were some of the most popular devotional prayers in the Middle Ages, very widely disseminated in both manuscript and printed Books of Hours. Also included here is the Creed, again in French, and two shorter prayers.

COMPARISONS

Les quinze ioyes de nostre dame moult devotes . Les sept requestes. Et obsecro en francoys, Lyon, 1511, [14] p; 14 cm

Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon, Rés 813145

Digitized, <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb37285139v>

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k790415.r=Obsecro%20en%20francoys?rk=21459;2>

And two editions which have not been digitized, but from their contents are worth exploring:

Obsecro en francoys et le O intemerata avec une autre oraison de Nostre dame et les douze vendredis blancs avec le service que l'on doit dire à chascun desdits vendredis, [Paris, c.152 7], in-8. Printed by A. Lotrian according to B. Moreau; BP16, no. 105476; USTC 52561

<https://www.ustc.ac.uk/editions/52561>

<https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb36823018s>

<https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb418784892>

Oraison tres devote a nostre dame (s.l. (France), s.n., s.d.)

British Library, General Reference Collection C 107 a12 (7); USTC 53312

<https://www.ustc.ac.uk/editions/53312>

LITERATURE

Brunet, Jacques-Charles. *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de livres*, Supplément by P. Deschamps et G. Brunet, vol. 2, Paris, 1880, col. 54, and 1094.

Pettegree, Andrew, Malcom Walsby, and Andrew Wilkinson. *French Vernacular Books: Books Published in the French language before 1601 = Livres vernaculaires français : Livres imprimés en français avant 1601*, Leiden and Boston, 2007.

Pettegree, Andrew, Paul Nelles, and P. Conner. *The Sixteenth-Century French Religious Book*, Aldershot, Hants, England and Burlington, Vermont, 2001.

Reinburg, Virginia. *French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer, c. 1400-1600*, Cambridge and New York, 2012.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC)

<https://www.ustc.ac.uk/>

Bibliographie des éditions parisiennes du 16e siècle (BP 16)
bp16.bnf.fr/

Latin and English text of "Obsecro te"

<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/BVM/ObsecroTe.html>

Latin and English text of "O intemerata"

<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/BVM/OIntemerata.html>

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