The Kerver *Missale Romanum*

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On January 2, 1564, the Parisian printer and bookseller Jacques Kerver had a stroke of good fortune. He was given exclusive rights for ten years to publish all the works which reflected the reforms of the Council of Trent. This privilege, granted by King Charles IX of France, gave Kerver a veritable monopoly on the required texts, such as breviaries and missals, essential to the process of standardizing the liturgy according to the Roman rite.[1] One of the books which he printed under this agreement was the *Missale Romanum*, a copy of which is now in the Moldenhauer Archives at the Library of Congress.

While in Barcelona in the summer of 1970, Rosaleen Moldenhauer located the book, then tattered, in an antiquarian shop. Subsequently, it was sent to London to be restored; bound in fine black leather, it is now in good condition. Some of its pages, however, particularly in the section of the Common of the Mass, tell a tale of heavy usage, for their corners and edges have been worn thin--and in places were reinforced--by the priests who turned them daily during countless celebrations of the Mass.

In the thirteenth century, missals replaced the older sacramentaries in liturgical use. Containing all the texts (and some music) for the preparation and celebration of the liturgy, missals initially were compiled according to numerous local rites. The reforms of Pope Innocent III saw the creation of a missal according to the usage in Rome, which, along with the breviary, was adopted and disseminated by Franciscan missionaries. Indeed, the first *Missale Romanum* (Milan, 1474) was printed under the Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV. A century later, a call for the suppression of all rites save that of Rome was issued during the Council of Trent, begun under Pope Paul III in 1542. The exclusive use of the *Missale Romanum* was decreed later in a Bull by Pope Pius V, published in the preliminary pages of the missal itself, the first edition of which was printed in 1570. Only dioceses and religious orders which could demonstrate a two-hundred-year-old tradition were exempted from the transition to the Roman rite.

 St. Luke is depicted painting the portrait of the Madonna and Child which hangs in St. Mary Major in Rome.

The Kerver edition of the *Missale Romanum* in the Moldenhauer Archives measures 28.5 by 21 cms. It is numbered by folio, with numbers beginning at the texts for the Proper of the First Sunday of Advent, the start of the liturgical year. This numbering ends with folio 233; immediately following is the Common of the Saints, which begins anew with a folio numbered 1. Some printing errors periodically confuse the sequence of folios. For example, while all the readings and prayers appear in their proper order, the numbers printed on folios 25 and 31 have been switched. Folio 150 has been misnumbered as 154, while another 154 then appears in its correct place; finally, folio 218 is misprinted as 118. Occasionally, other typographical errors occur, as when the rubric for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany is followed by one for the Third Sunday. Here again, however, the texts are in the correct order.

Perhaps the most intriguing feature of the Kerver *Missale Romanum* is the series of particularly fine woodcuts which introduce the texts.[2] In addition to larger images such as the one of Saints Peter and Paul which graces the title page, there are intricately carved initials which not only begin the prayers and readings but also illustrate in painstaking detail aspects from the lives of the saints or themes of particular liturgies. For example, the woodcut for the feast of Francis of Assisi (October 4) recalls the saint's reception of the stigmata by representing a celestial vision of Christ crucified from whose wounds come lines to Francis's hands and feet. A particularly noteworthy woodcut accompanies the feast of St. Luke (October 18). The evangelist is depicted as an artist himself, painting a portrait of Mary and the Child Jesus. Luke's Gospel is known for its Marian elements, but this representation of the saint comes from popular legend. Luke, it was claimed, was an artist as well as a physician, and his portrait of Madonna and Child was reputedly one which hung in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.[3] The most fascinating woodcuts appear at

the end of the missal in the section on the Mass for the Dead, wherein stark images depict the various stages of a Christian's departure from this world.

Tridentine reform also affected the church's music, as members of the papal synod attempted to abolish the secular elements which they claimed had tainted it. As K. G. Fellerer has noted, the Council was of "paramount significance" in the subsequent structuring of Catholic Church music as well as in general church usages.[4] The reformers decreed that music, as the Liturgy, would be controlled by making its performance conform to the usage of Rome; thus, the chant in the *Missale Romanum* reflects that tradition. The Kerver missal contains fifty-eight pages with music, beginning with the chants for Holy Week. Plainsong notation, often in ligatures, is printed on four-line red staves, using C and F clefs. Common eccelesiastical Latin abbreviations such as *Dñe* for *Domine* are used throughout the text.

The Kerver family's activity in the Parisian printing industry goes back to the 1490s--some twenty years after the first book was printed in the city--when Thielman Kerver I[er] ran an active business in the publication of religious works, such as Books of Hours.[5] His colophon was a woodcut of two unicorns, both facing left, standing on either side of a tree which bore a shield with his crest and the initials "T K."[6] Jacques Kerver's colophon, which appears as a full-page illustration at the end of the missal, is an adaption of the former. His depicts a single unicorn, again facing left, but with its right front leg braced over a shield bearing the family crest, now initialed "I K" (Iacobus Kerver). Below the woodcut appears a quotation from verse 6 of Psalm 28: "Dilectus quemadmodum filius unicornium--greatly beloved son of unicorns." Indeed, the symbol of the unicorn was used to identify the bookseller's shop, as was the address, noted on the title page of the missal, "Via Iacobæa, Sub signo Unicornis--Rue Jacques, under the sign of the unicorn."

Two hooded figures kneel near a grave as skulls peer eerily from the ossuary in the background.

The title page also notes Kerver's exclusive right to print the missal as granted by the king and the pontiffs Pius V and Gregory XIII. In 1572, a group of other printers petitioned the Parisian parliament to deny Kerver a prolongation of his privilege to the Tridentine publications. Although it upheld the original agreement, in the following year the government denied Kerver the possibility of extending it past January 1, 1575.[7] Also, while adjudicating the protest of the other printers, the Parliament set the prices which Kerver could charge for the publications in question, the cost of the *Missale Romanum* to be 50 sous.[8] Kerver, however, succeeded in printing at least three editions of the *Missale Romanum*, while the printing rights still belonged to him.[9]

Where might the missal in the Moldenhauer Archives have gone after it left Kerver's shop in Paris? Annotations can be found on several pages. For example, on 123 recto, the book apparently was torn or worn to such an extent that another piece of paper was pasted onto the bottom of the damaged page and the words of the Consecration were written in again by hand. A similar patch, used to repair the following folio, offers a possible clue to the book's whereabouts: at the bottom of 124 recto, the scrap of paper pasted onto the page seems to have come from what might have been an inventory. While the ends of the phrases are illegible Latin ecclesiastical or legal abbreviations, the beginnings are quite clear; the first reads "La campana maior" and the second, "La petita campana." The language is Catalan. Another note written in the September feast calendar confirms the possibility of a Catalonian provenance. Next to September 12 is written "dedicationis ecclæ. S^{ti} Petri de Torello"--dedication of the church of St. Peter of Torello. San Pedro de Torello--or in Catalan, Sant Pere de Torelló--is a small town in the province of Barcelona, in the diocese of Vich, a city prominent enough in the sixteenth century to have sent its bishop as one of Spain's representatives to the Council of Trent. The notation of such an important local feast strongly suggests the possibility that the book at one time belonged to a church in Sant Pere.

On the title page is written what appears to be "Ec de S^{nt} Roch--Church of St. Roch."[10] The words beneath are illegible. Did the missal at one time belong to a parish dedicated to Roch, perhaps in France where the saint was honored in an active cult? During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, antipapal sentiments there encouraged the return to older French rites, resulting in the abandonment of such books as the *Missale Romanum*. A book as valuable as Kerver's missal would most likely have been sold and taken where it could be put to use, for example,

over the Pyrenees to Spain. Because the ties between France and Catalonia were age-old, and particularly because Spain remained a bastion in defense of Roman Catholicism, the exchange of a missal from a French parish which no longer wanted it to a Catalan parish which needed it seems quite possible.

Another bit of marginalia deserves comment. One priest who used the missal had carefully marked the prayer which was said in preparation for Mass; attributed to St. Ambrose, the lengthy "Summe sacerdos et vere pontifex Iesu Christe" takes up three pages of the *Missale Romanum*. In later editions, the prayer was printed in seven short sections, one of which would be recited each day. The cleric made small crosses and marked off daily sections with the rubrics, "Feria 2ª, Feria 3ª," etc. Might this imply that the book was used in a parish which, for whatever out? In fact, since major liturgical changes were not made until the early twentieth century, the missal may have been employed until it was too fragile for further use. The missal's worn pages testify to years-perhaps even centuries-in the service of the Church, at least some of which appear to have been spent only fifty miles from where the book was found in Barcelona.

[1] Philippe Renouard, *Imprimeurs & Libraires Parisiens du XVI^e siècle, Fascicule Cavellat* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1986), p. 176.

[2] A fuller discussion of the illustrations in the Kerver *Missale Romanum* can be found in volume 2 of *Harvard College Library Department of Printing and Graphic Arts Catalogue of Books and Manuscripts, Part I: French 16th Century Books*, comp. Ruth Mortimer (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1964), p. 477.

[3] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 174. My thanks to Keith Glaeske, for calling my attention to this legend about Luke.

[4] K. G. Fellerer, "Church Music and the Council of Trent," *Musical Quarterly* 39 (1953): 576. This article offers a full discussion of the major issues surrounding the Tridentine musical reforms.

[5] For a list of some of the early publications of Thielman Kerver, see Anatole Claudin, *Histoire de l'Imprimerie en France au XV^e et au XVI^e Siècle: Tables Alphabétiques* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1915; reprint, Lichtenstein: Kraus-Thomson, 1971), pp. 199-200.

[6] For an illustration, see Rev. William Parr Greswell's *Annals of Parisian Typography* (London: Cadell and Davies et al., 1818), p. 180.

[7] Renouard, loc. cit.

[8] Ibid.

[9] The discussion of the missal in the Harvard College Library catalog cited above notes the possibility of four editions by Kerver. The one at Harvard was printed on June 8, 1574, while the one in the Moldenhauer Archives was printed on August 21 of the same year. See the unnumbered folio at the back of the missal which exhibits the characters of the missal's typeface.

[10] My thanks to Charles Downey for assistance with the Latin abbreviations.