

# The early printed Books of Hours in the Grey Collection in Cape Town: evidence of an information revolution

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## Abstract

Printed books of hours, the best-seller of the late medieval trade in books, provide evidence of an information revolution equal to that occasioned by the Internet today. The Grey Collection of the National Library in Cape Town possesses eight books of hours, printed between 1498 and 1530, and they are almost completely unknown. Yet these valuable incunabula, all of them printed on vellum with hand-painted initials, and some of them with hand-painted miniatures, are of importance to anybody interested in books, the history of the book, the dissemination of information, the art of the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and early printing. They are also religious books, and of value to people interested in that discipline. The books are therefore eminently suitable as subjects for transdisciplinary research through which the subjects of history, sociology, art and religion can be drawn together. Two of these books, printed by Thielman Kerver in Paris, are discussed in detail in this article. The books are especially remarkable for their many illustrations that include pictures around the borders of each page as well as full-page illustrations. The pictures are neither metal cuts nor woodcuts, as were usual in that period, but relief prints. The most important part of the texts is a sequence of prayers to the Virgin Mary. Soon after these books were printed, in 1571, Pope Pius V prohibited the use of all existing books of hours.

**Keywords:** Book of hours, incunabula, printing, Grey Collection, Virgin Mary.

## Introduction

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century there was a radical change in communications technology, just as incisive as the digital revolution we are currently experiencing. The invention of movable metal type around 1450 made possible the mass-production of books which had previously been painstakingly written by hand and had therefore been rare and costly (John Rylands Library). The printing press caused an 'information revolution' matched by the internet today. Printing could and did spread ideas more quickly and with greater impact than manuscript copies could (Kreis 2004). The transition from manuscripts to printed books parallel the transition from printed books to electronic media that we are currently experiencing. The immediacy experienced in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is illustrated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century especially by Web 2.0 sites that allow users to interact in a social media dialogue (O'Reilly 2005).

As the technology of printing moved through Europe it initiated a development that played a big part in the growth of literacy. In 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe the intellectual and cultural rebirth known as the Renaissance altered people's opinions and the information they needed. The invention of print increased the number of books in circulation and helped to fulfil the requirements of progressively enquiring people (John Rylands Library). Today, the internet has made huge amounts of online knowledge available.

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As the number of books in circulation grew, the way in which people read changed: there was a move away from an individual reading a book aloud to a group, to private and silent reading. The act of reading and acquiring information removed the control of the literate privileged over learning and education. Print became a weapon that could be exploited for propaganda purposes. Religious and political leaders tried to control what was printed and read by the masses (John Rylands Library). The invention and spread of the printing press are widely regarded as the most influential events in the second millennium AD. This was the beginning of the modern era (Hindman 2009:44). Today, in the third millennium, the way in which people read has again changed: they read from a screen on which script becomes visible by typing and by clicking a button. The manner in which people experience and portray the world they live in has again been transformed 'The challenge is no longer about knowing, but about distilling and processing information. It is about how we think and not about what we know' (Salcito 2000). Currently there is a worldwide polemic about the usurping of power and control by the United States National Security Agency. Oliver Stone said on 12 July 2013 in the online newspaper, *The Guardian*: 'The government's gigantic surveillance machine is eating our freedom'. There have been many similar outcries.

The 15<sup>th</sup> -century explosion of information has been repeated in the present day to such an extent that it justifies the designation of 'revolution' (Robinson and Halle 2002: 362). The Library of Congress has scanned more than 60,000 historically valuable books that had been almost impossible to read, even by scholars, because of their fragility. Now everybody around the globe with an internet connection can access them. Google has scanned more than 10 million books and put them online at no cost to the reader. If this trend continues, and there is no reason why it shouldn't, a huge amount of published material will soon be available to almost everybody almost all the time. Even the most impoverished countries will be able to share in the wealth of culture of the richest countries. The children of the poor countries are getting computers through the efforts of philanthropists. One of the aims has been to provide them with information through internet access. Our universe has already been vastly changed as a result of low-cost storage, digital formats, mass-scanning undertakings and superior search engines (Elgan 2010). Social media, as distinct from industrial or traditional media such as newspapers, television, and film, are comparatively inexpensive and accessible to anyone to publish or access information, especially when used in combination with mobile devices.

The explosive development in devotional readings, especially books of hours, during the fifteenth century therefore has similarities with the globalization in our time since one of the most direct ways in which globalization manifests itself is through information and communication technologies (Jameson 1998:55).

Books of hours are among the most important artistic objects from the late medieval and Renaissance periods. Between the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> and the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries more books of hours were written and printed than any other kind of book. 'They were the best sellers of an era that lasted 300 years. In an era when some of the most important painting was in books, the illuminated miniatures in manuscript Books of Hours were the picture galleries of the Middle Ages' (Wieck 1997:51). They are still being bought mainly for their paintings. Here again, there is a parallel with what is happening today. E-books are rapidly becoming the preferred way to read books. Michael Agresta has predicted, however, that the next generation of paper books will likely rival the art hanging beside them on the walls for beauty, expense, and 'aura' (2012).

There are 27 Books of Hours in manuscript in the Grey Collection of the National Library in Cape Town, dating from 1385 to the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as well as eight early printed books of hours, dating from 1498 to 1530. South Africa therefore has in its possession this invaluable collection reflecting the very beginning of the explosion of information at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, an upsurge that is being repeated now at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the eruption of electronic media. The books of hours in manuscript have been described in articles but almost nothing has been written about the printed books of hours, even though the latter might be of even more importance.

### **The Grey Collection**

Sir George Grey was governor of the Cape from 1854 to 1861. He donated two collections of books during his lifetime, the one to the Cape Colony, the other to New Zealand. Both are known as 'the Grey Collection'. There are 5200 books including 119 incunabula and 114 medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in the Grey Collection in the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town, and 1500 books and manuscripts in the Grey collection in the Auckland Central Library in New Zealand (De Hamel in Kerr 2006:7). Grey bought rare manuscripts and books from bookshops and salesrooms in Europe and had them shipped to Cape Town and later New Zealand at a time when even an exchange of letters took months (De Hamel in Kerr 2006:7).

To have assembled such a collection in a lifetime would be herculean. To have done so twice, as Grey did, giving his whole private library to Cape Town in 1861 and then beginning again for Auckland, is without parallel in book-collecting history. (De Hamel in Kerr 2006: 7)

SIR George Grey was one of the most outstanding - and notorious - of the British colonial governors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He spent over fifty years as administrator of New Zealand, South Australia and the Cape Colony, during which time he had a large influence on their political infrastructure. Six biographies have been written about him, but he will probably be remembered mainly for his books (De Hamel in Kerr 2006:8; Kerr 2006: 13).

### **Books of hours**

Books of hours are books intended for private devotions. They were extremely popular with the Catholic laity who was able to afford them. They were based on the monastic hours, but although they were religious books, they 'served more as status symbols and fashion accessories than paths to heaven, a fact testified to in the large number of copies that survive in exceptional condition' (Brown 2008). Most extant books of hours are manuscripts, beautifully written out by hand on vellum with sumptuous initial letters, ornate page borders, and fine paintings, which are called miniatures. They are possibly 'the most beautiful of all books' (Brown 2008). They are also some of the most expensive, with prices for modest examples starting today in five figures. One of the finest books of hours – the richly illuminated *Rothschild Prayerbook* – sold in 1999 for a record \$13.5 million. This book was illuminated over the period 1500 – 1520 by a number of artists and is now in a private collection (Brown 2008).

Books of hours were written and later printed for ordinary people, not for monks, priests or scholars. They are usually small enough to be held in the hand so that their illuminations can be admired rather than put on a shelf and studied for their text. They are still much

appreciated by bibliophiles. The book of hours was the first really popular book, even for those people who had never owned books before (De Hamel 1994: 168).

By the early 15<sup>th</sup> century more and more educated and wealthy commoners became able to afford a book of hours. This was the result of measures put in place to regulate the work of copyists and illuminators. In the words of Russel Hale 'A Book of Hours was still an expensive luxury, but it was a luxury more and more people could afford' (<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu>). Manuscript books of hours began to be mass-produced by publishers by the mid- and late-15<sup>th</sup> century. Book sellers planned the writing and illumination of many similar manuscripts in France and the Low Countries, resulting in a standardized illustration and decoration. Many of these books of hours were intended for export, and their content, too, was planned for the religious customs of the target market. These early developments in the production, exporting and marketing methods of manuscript books of hours caused meaningful changes in the book trade with significant repercussions when moveable-type printing presses were introduced in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Even these mass-produced books of hours appear luxurious to modern eyes, and they are frequently written on expensive vellum (Hale 2010).

Books of hours adapted easily to the print age. The first printing press appeared in Paris in 1470 and in London in 1475, almost 20 years after Gutenberg printed the Bible. Books of hours were soon among the most sought after of the early titles ([http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/enews/2010/ulv/books\\_of\\_hours.html](http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/enews/2010/ulv/books_of_hours.html)). When books of hours came to be printed, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, their pictures, made accessible to a wide market, insured their success. Between 1480 and 1600, 1,775 different editions were printed. This success was at first partially due to the border pictures which the printers of books of hours used as decoration. 'This was a selling point, and they knew it; printers often mentioned their pictures on their title pages' (De Hamel 1994: 168). For much of the early print era, many of the printed books of hours were intended to resemble manuscripts; they were printed on vellum and ruled and decorated by hand. Many still contained painted miniatures. Often only a trained eye can distinguish these from manuscripts easily. The designs of the wood and metal cuts that were used to print pictures and decorations were provided by professional illuminators; the Master of Anne of Brittany, for example, contributed designs for Thielman Kerver, who printed two of the books of hours in the Grey Collection. What distinguishes the books of hours in the Grey Collection is that they are all printed on vellum. Such books must always have been rare. The best examples of these printed books of hours are much more attractive than the mass-produced manuscript versions with their roughly painted miniatures (Hale 2010). It was unnecessary to draw lines in a printed book. Even the small initials could have been placed between lines of print without the assistance of the lines. The red lines in the incunabula are decorative, though, and add to the attractiveness of the book. The French printers of books of hours added the lines to make it clear to the buyers that the book was printed on vellum and not on paper. This would have helped to make the printed book acceptable even to snobbish buyers who wanted only manuscripts on their shelves (Alexander 1947:107).

These hybrid books are interesting in themselves, but they are especially important since they indicate the end of an era (Hindman 2009:40). The new, more economical print technology increasingly encroached on the territory of the written and decorative arts of the previous generation (Hale 2010).

For more than 300 years, more books of hours were produced than other types of books, even the Bible. Between c1250 when the first books of hours were written, to 1571, when during the counter-Reformation, Pope Pius V forbade the use of books of hours, almost every European family of what Hindman (2009: 42) calls 'a certain means' owned at least one book. Many families owned several. Members of the royalty were often enthusiastic bibliophiles, and had long shelves full of them, richly painted by the foremost painters of the time. The book of hours therefore deserves the description of the 'first bestseller' (Hindman 2009: 42).

Russel Hale tells us that the rosary slowly became more popular than the book of hours to assist in prayer. It was much easier to remember and repeat devotions using rosary beads than to recite the texts of the Hours of the Virgin, he says (Hale 2010). Eamon Duffy, however, says that 'image, bead and book' continued to coexist (Duffy 2006: 17). He reproduces two pictures from the book of hours for Mary of Burgundy (Duffy 2006: plates 9 and 18); the first showing a rosary and a book of hours displayed together in a late medieval house, the second a woman reading a book of hours in personal prayer while seeing a vision of the Virgin Mary in a church (Duffy 2006: 16 and 30). Because the book of hours became less popular during the Reformation, remaining manuscripts and printed books slowly moved from the hands of ordinary people to the shelves of national and private libraries. The last formally approved book of hours was issued in 1575 by Queen Elizabeth (Hale 2010).

Although personal prayers, especially deathbed prayers, were often copied into printed books of hours, suggesting increasing lay piety, Duffy rejects this 'as a sign of a new individualism or interiority', indicating the emergence of a 'proto-protestant sensibility', preparing the ground for the Reformation. Although books of hours were used by individuals, it has to be remembered that they were people with a strong sense of responsibility towards their families, guilds and the church, he says. By 1534 Protestant reformers were targeting books of hours in particular. They hated the prayers for the dead, Marian devotion and the pope. For Catholics, books of hours became 'a badge of non-compliance with the Reformation' (Duffy 2006:145, 147).

### **Contents of books of hours**

The book of hours is a prayer book that contains in the first place the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that is, the Hours of the Virgin. It is for this reason that the text is called a 'book of hours'. The Hours of the Virgin are a series of prayers to the Virgin Mary that were meant to be recited during day. The rest of the prayers commonly found in books of hours were intended to tend to the remaining spiritual requirements of late medieval and Renaissance people. Reciting the penitential psalms, for instance, would help them to resist the temptation to commit one or more of the seven deadly sins (for which they could go to hell). The Office of the Dead was intended to be said to shorten the period in purgatory of friends and relatives (Wieck 1997: 9).

Books of hours were pleasant to use. The principal text, the Hours of the Virgin, was the same every day; only the three psalms of the nocturne of Matins changed depending on the day of the week). The contents of the other Hours, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline<sup>2</sup>, were unchanging. A few books of hours contained some textual variations for Advent and Christmas, but these were slight (Wieck 1997: 10).

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<sup>2</sup> Matins and Lauds: at night or upon rising; Prime at 6.00 am; Terce at 9.00 am; Sext at noon; None at 3.00 pm; Vespers: evening; Compline: before sleeping.

Books of hours almost always open with a calendar of the church year, listing saints' days for each month. Then there are occasionally short texts between the calendar and the Hours of the Virgin. These mostly consist of four short extracts from the gospels and two prayers to the Virgin known from their incipits as the 'Obsecro te' (Beseech Thee) and 'O intemerata' (O undefiled One). Other texts may follow that vary according to date and region and possibly the amount that the client would spend. The penitential psalms with a Litany, and the Office of the Dead are easy to find. There are seven penitential psalms (Psalms 3, 6, 37, 50, 101, 129 and 142) and they all concern the sinner who wants to be forgiven. The Litany is a very old incantation that lists the names of saints, including angels and archangels, apostles and evangelists, martyrs, confessors and virgins. This is followed by 'ora pro nobis', pray for us, and other exhortations such as 'from hardness of heart -- Good Lord deliver us'. Medieval people were very aware that death might strike at any time. There were many wars and they had a constant fear of plague. The obsession with death is apparent from many illustrations in books of hours during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, for instance the skeleton and other symbols of death attacking one person in a crowd or one of two companions. The Office of the Dead includes more psalms and readings meant in the first place to be recited around the coffin of the deceased, but also to be said every day as a reminder of one's humanity and as security against dying unexpectedly and unprepared (De Hamel 1994: 174).

There are contemporary accounts describing users of books of hours reading the text eight times a day, but one can cynically ask if books of hours were really read often. The answer is: we don't know. Extant manuscripts are sometimes in such a pristine condition that it cannot be imagined that they were often read, but it is possible that the extant examples are exceptions. The ordinary copies could have been read to pieces (De Hamel 1994: 173, 174).

The reason for the enduring popularity of books of hours lies mainly in the pictures. These pictures were often the only art-works the middle class owner possessed. Even the affluent, who could buy and order paintings and decorations for their walls, found great pleasure in the miniatures in books of hours. These miniatures were, of course, versions of the subjects the owners saw at church (Wieck 1997: 58)

The pictures had two main purposes: they were bookmarks, indicating the beginning of important texts; they also embodied the texts, providing themes upon which to meditate; they were 'painted prayers.' The miniatures or prints in the owner's book that showed 'the mysteries of the incarnation, the sorrows of the Passion, or the chill of death', evoked the same feelings as the images he or she saw in church (Wieck 1997: 58).

### The early printed books of hours in the Grey Collection

*Heures de nostre dame en frâcoys et en latin.* Paris: Antoine Vérard. c. 1498.

*Horae beatae Mariae Virginis, cum calendario. Use of Rome.* Paris: Thielman Kerver. 1503.

*Hore dive Virginis Marie. Use of Rome.* Paris: Thielman Kerver. 1503.

*Heures à lusaige de Rome tout au long sans rien requerir novvell.* Paris: Gillet Hardouyn, 1509.

*Heures a lusiage de Rome tout au long sans rien requerir.* Paris: for Germain Hardouyn. c. 1500-1530.

*Hore beate Marie virginis secūdum vsum Romanum.* Paris: Giles Hardouyn. c.1500-1530.

*A la louenge de dieu et de la tressaincte & glorieuse Vierge Marie.* Paris: Gillet Hardouyn. c. 1500-1530.

*Horae*. Paris: Jean Barbier for Guillaume le Rouge. 1509.

### **The two books of hours printed by Thielman Kerver**

In this article only the two books of hours printed and published by Thielman Kerver will be discussed in detail. Their shelf-numbers in the National Library in Cape Town are 3d4 and 3d5 and in the rest of this article they will be referred to as Book 3d4 and Book 3d5. Thielman Kerver (active 1497-1522) was one of the most highly regarded of the early Parisian printers and type engravers, a group that also included Gilles Hardouyn, Antoine Verard, Simon Vostre, Guyot Marchant and Philippe Pigouchet. He was one of the first Parisian printers who could print in both black and red (Claerr 2013:411). The world of publishing in Paris was a melting-pot and individuals from all across Europe could be found. The first printers to set up in Paris were German and Swiss. Thielman Kerver was originally from Koblenz. He worked (and probably lived) ‘in vico sancti Iacobi/ad signum Vnicornis/ & ibidem venales habent’ (‘in Saint Jacob’s lane/at the sign of the Unicorn/where they are also for sale’) ( See <http://antiquescouncil.com/antiques>). The name of Thielman Kerver is linked to the printing of some of the most beautiful liturgical books produced in Paris during the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. His most famous publications are editions of books of hours, many of which included hand-painted miniatures and capital letters. Kerver was one of France’s most productive printers of such books. After his death in 1522 the printing house founded by him in 1497 was managed by his widow, Iolande Bonhomme, who specialized in reprinting Thielman’s earlier publications that were still very popular. The business was later directed by Thielman’s son, Thielman the second, and eventually passed to Thielman the second’s son, Jacques Kerver. The firm published liturgical books of different types until 1556. There have been accusations that Thielman Kerver copied from Simon Vostre ‘in a most barefaced way’ and Kerver’s style does show some similarity with, and is no doubt indebted to Simon Vostre. This kind of plagiarism was prevalent all over Europe, however, and little attention was paid to it (Cundall 1895). Although Kerver printed many books of hours, fewer copies exist than of the books of hours of his colleagues, Simon Vostre and the Hardouyns. This might be because fewer copies were printed on vellum and paper copies were destroyed (Barker 2004: 5).

In the Auckland Grey Collection there is a manuscript written by Sir George Grey called ‘Old Books’. It is a eulogy on books, written on Christmas morning in Cape Town, probably in 1860. Kerr remarks that Grey’s prose is ‘florid and sentimental’ (p. 167). It was sparked by Book 3d4: ‘On my knees on this bright early Christmas morning lies an old volume of prayers and ancient hymns printed on vellum which issued from the press about the year 1490 [sic]...They now print not books so expensively adorned even upon paper – still less on vellum. What has the preservation through four centuries cost in house room, in care, in repairing. Were all these summed up what would be thy value now...I a lone and weary traveller...will leave thee ...fresh as in thy youth for those who shall follow after me...’ (Kerr 2006: 167, 168).

Books 3d4 and 3d5 have hand-painted initials, but no hand-painted miniatures. They are nevertheless remarkable because their illustrations are relief prints not woodcuts or wood engravings. They were executed with an engraver’s tools on metal plates, perhaps copper. Alexander remarks that ‘this is a rare technique which is found only in French incunabula’ (Alexander 1947: 106). Book 3d5 begins with a full-page reproduction of Thielman Kerver’s printer’s mark. It shows two unicorns standing upright, holding a shield with the letters ‘TK’ against a tree. Under the reproduction are the words:

'Hore beatae virginis marie sed tu verum usum Romanum cum aliis multis folio frequenti notatis: characteribus suis diligentius impresse Per Thielmann kerver' ('Hours of the blessed Virgin Mary according to the use of Rome with many other written pages carefully printed by Thielman Kerver').

In the printer's mark as well as many of the border pictures and full-page pictures in both books the background is *criblé* or dotted white – a practice of French engravers.



**Figure 1.** The Kerver printer's mark, as it appears in Book 3d5. The page is badly discoloured. This reproduction is missing from Book 3d4. (National Library of South Africa)



Alexander remarks that this is executed with a burin<sup>3</sup> alone, but is similar to some rare relief prints where the stellated background was achieved by punching the plates, usually made of lead, with differently shaped punches (Alexander 1947: 106). The dots are firstly intended to imitate similar work in the gold borders of illuminated books, and secondly to produce a white background without having to cut away the metal. (Cundall 1895). According to Alexander (1947:107) these prints 'show perhaps the closest resemblance that early printing affords between the printed book and the illuminated manuscript, for the page is conceived as a decorative unit, in which type, like writing, is an integral part'.

The printer's mark is followed by a full-page picture of Zodiacal Man or Astrological Man, that shows a human figure with the four 'humours' (choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic and melancholic) represented in each corner in relation to the four elements (fire, air, earth and water) (Jokinen 2011). This picture is also missing from book 3d4. 'Astrological man' or 'Zodiacal man' demonstrated the medieval belief that 'man as a microcosm mirrored the macrocosm of the universe' (Jokinen 2011). Man's body was divided into 'regions', ruled by the signs of the Zodiac. Likewise, the earth was divided into regions ruled by the planets. Astrological signs were believed to rule the body and its health. There were many variations of this picture (Jokinen 2011). In Book 3d5 the man is surrounded by banners with inscriptions in French. Two verses in French below the picture relate parts of the human body to the influence of particular planets.

The texts in both books are printed in black. The text in book 3d5 is underlined in red to make it resemble a manuscript. The text in Book 3d4 is not underlined. In both books rubrics are printed in red. Both books also include blue, red and gold line fillers. Book 3d4, the more attractive of the two books, is in an almost pristine condition. Book 3d5 shows many signs of use and neglect, however: the pages are badly discoloured.

Book 3d4 has a cutting from an auctioneer's list on the front flyleaf, stating 'But the most precious amongst the printed books is an octavo prayer-book, in Latin, printed upon vellum (Paris, by Th. Kerner (sic) 1497), which is filled with beautiful woodcuts. (no. 39.) Vide Dibdin's bibliographical Decameron, vol.i, pp. 62 & 66'.<sup>4</sup>

Written on the same flyleaf above the cutting, are the words 'Printed by G Kerver Paris. 1497' in Sir George Grey's handwriting. The signature 'G. Grey' appears in the right hand margin in the right top corner of p. 3. He obviously had a special affection for this Book of Hours. In the catalogue *Short-title catalogue of Early Printed Books in South African Libraries (1470 – 1550)*, Cape Town: South African Library, 1977, the date is given as 'c. 1503' but it is not known from where that date was derived.

Book 3d5 also has a cutting from an auctioneer's list on the front flyleaf: '390: Horae Beatae mariae Virginis, cum Calendario, printed on Vellum in red and black, each page surrounded with beautiful and spirited cuts of Scripture History, Hunting Scenes &c. and further illustrated with 18 large plates the size of the page 8vo, black morocco, gilt leaves £3.15s Pris

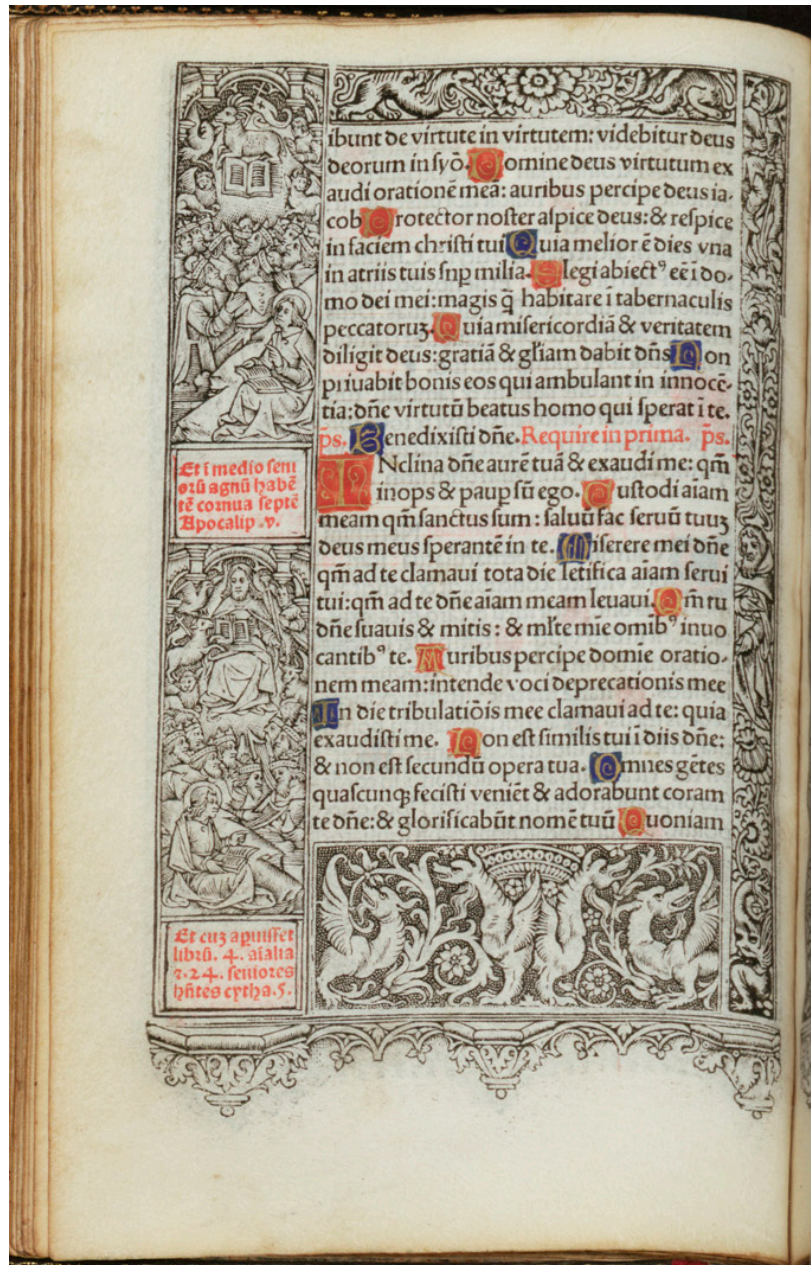
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<sup>3</sup> A sharp and finely pointed tool driven into the metal by a blow.

<sup>4</sup> In his book, *The bibliographical Decameron: or, Ten days pleasant discourse upon illuminated manuscripts, and subjects connected with early engraving, typography and bibliography* (W. Bulmer & co., Shakespeare Press: 1917), Thomas Frognall Dibdin refers to a missal in the Spencer Collection, printed on vellum by T. Kerver (sic) in 1498 (sic), and reproduces four of the illustrations in Book 3d4.

T. Kerver, (1500) A rare and beautiful specimen of Kerver's celebrated Missal Printing on Vellum: all the capitals are rubricated and heightened with gold'.

The two books are very much alike, but 3d4 is more carefully printed. It is also more carefully decorated. In both books each page of text is surrounded by a border of little pictures. These, sometimes peculiar, engravings are also characteristic of books published towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries by other well-known French printers, for instance Pigouchet, Jean Dupré, Antoine Verard, and Simon Vostre (Cundall 1895). Book 3d4 has an attractive lace border at the bottom of the page that is missing in Book 3d5. A leaf from a book of hours with a similar border, printed by Thielman Kerver, appears on <http://www.oldworldauctions.com/archives/detail>.



**Figure 2. Block with 20 figures, top of the left border, p. 96 of Book 3d4. (National Library of South Africa)**

The measurements of the binding of Book 3d5 are: 17.3cm x 11.2cm x 3.2cm. Inside measurements are 16.8cm x 10.3 cm. It has a torn, undecorated black morocco binding with

five compartments on the back. The words 'Officium virginis' are printed in gold in the second compartment and the date '1507' in the third compartment. The book is dated as '1500' in a printed note, pasted on the flyleaf. The colophon on the last page at the end of the text provides the exact date: 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, 1503 (Impressu – Parisiis anno dni millesimo quagesimotertio kalendas Augusti).

Book 3d4 is slightly larger: 18cm x 12.5cm x 3.1cm. The inside measurements are 17.6cm x 11cm. It has a nineteenth century binding of green morocco with gold tooling and a red backing that is now loose. There had been gold leaf on the edges of the leaves but that is now rubbed off. It is not dated. The book has an 'Almanach'<sup>5</sup> for the years 1497-1520, but Kerver used this 'Almanach' in many editions. The note on the front flyleaf, referred to earlier, dates the book as 1497. Kerver established his own press only in 1498, however (Alexander 1947: 106). The historiated borders in both books are built up from little blocks measuring 3.4cm x 2.2cm. At the top or bottom of the page there are larger blocks of 5.7 x 2.4cm. The delicacy of these illustrations can be illustrated by one of these 3.4cm x 2.2 blocks on which appears a biblical scene with 20 figures portrayed.

The contents of both books follow the pattern set out earlier in this article. Following the calendar there are short readings from each of the four gospels with prayers, and a longer reading of the Passion according to St John. This is followed by the Hours of the Virgin. After that there are miscellaneous prayers, offices and prayers for Advent and Easter, followed by the penitential psalms and the Office for the Dead. Other additions are: Hours of the Cross, Hours of the Holy Ghost, Conception of the Virgin Mary, and Suffrages for the Saints. In both books the 'Obsecro te' and 'O intemerate' prayers to the Virgin appear here, and not at the beginning of the books, the more usual place. Each book ends with 16 prayers, the last, four pages long, to be said 'ad honorem in temperate dei genitricis virginis marie' ('in honour of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God'). The texts in the two books are almost exactly the same, even in so far as that each page begins and ends with the same words, with a few exceptions. These exceptions show that they were not part of the same edition. There are other differences, for instance: at the end of each month in the calendar, 3d5 has a French rhyme that is lacking in 3d4; in general more abbreviations are used in the rubrics of 3d5 than in those of 3d4. There are 17 full-page pictures in Book 3d5, the flight to Egypt having been removed. There are 15 full-page pictures in Book 3d4 that lacks the Kerver trademark and 'Astrological man'. The full-page pictures are mostly the same in both books. In five instances the pictures are not the same although they depict the same scene.

The most striking feature of these two books of hours is their many pictures. At least two artists drew the more than 300 different illustrations on the 236 pages of book 3d4. Alexander points out that one of them, 'A', is a superior artist to the second one, 'B'. 'A' is still established in the Gothic tradition, while 'B' is more 'modern'. Renaissance elements can be seen in his ornamentation and painting of architecture, he says. He points out that some of the borders had been influenced by Italian Renaissance ornamentation and could have been designed by 'B'. 'A', however, must have designed most of the miniature biblical scenes, he says (Alexander 1947: 108). The pictures in Book 3d5 are all by artist 'A' (Alexander 1947: 109). Claerr discusses a copy of an edition of 1505 by Kerver. This edition is similar to, but not the same as Books 3d4 and 3d5. It is possible to distinguish two styles in the engravings in the edition of 1505, he says. There are twelve large engravings in the style of the Master of

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<sup>5</sup> A register of the days, weeks and months of the year.

Anne of Brittany. Most of these engravings had already been used by Kerver since 1498 and came from Pigochet. Claerr describes this, the first style, as Parisian, Gothic and archaic. The other style is more distinguished and emphasized, he says. It is similar to that of Jean Pichore (2013: 414). During the following years the Gothic illustrations disappeared almost completely, he says. The style used then by Kerver suited the Roman typesetting better (2013: 415). Claerr therefore differs from Alexander, who regards the Gothic style as the superior one. The styles of artists 'A' and 'B' is apparent in their pictures of the presentation in the temple. Figure 3 is from 3d4 and is by artist 'B'. Figure 4 is from 3d5 and is by artist 'A'.



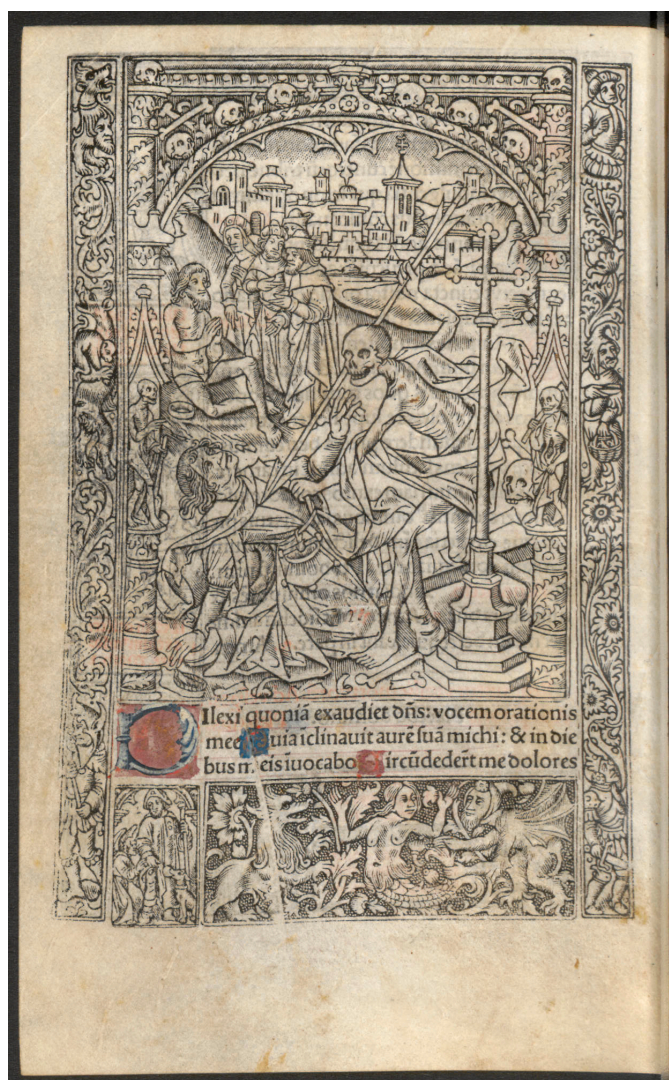
**Figure 3.** The presentation in the temple by Artist 'B' This artist's style is more intricate than that of 'A', and the characterization of the faces is more vivid, His sense of perspective is apparent. The room shows depth that is lacking in the picture of Artist 'A'. (National Library of South Africa)



**Figure 4. The presentation in the temple by Artist 'A'.  
(National Library of South Africa)**

The border decorations in Books 3d4 and 3d5 do not follow decorative cycles in an organic way. A mixture of daily activities, fantastical creatures and lewd humour fill the borders of each page. Marginalia served medieval readers as reminders of proper and improper conduct as well as memory aids to help recall prayers they had learned by heart. (John Rylands Library. Special Collections Blog). Scenes from the life of Christ, the saints and the Old Testament alternate with 'diabolical and fantastic allegorical decorations', drawn from nature or from real life (Guiseppe Solmi. Studio Bibliografico). The animals are usually dragons or apes. Dragons are often to be found in medieval bestiaries. They are closely associated with the devil, the greatest of serpents. Apes are commonly engaged in human tasks, but in

unfamiliar or bungling ways. This is a parody on people who thought too highly of themselves. Musicians in the borders probably reminded readers of the sung performance of the text. The pictures seldom refer to the text on the same page although the full-page illustrations are relevant. At the beginning of the penitential psalms in both books, a leering David looks from an upstairs window at Bathsheba in her bath. This erotic scene was a standard illustration of the penitential psalms in late medieval French books of hours. It is not a picture of David, the penitent sinner, but of the source of his sin. 'The images of the naked Bathsheba in these Books of Hours seem to offer less of an admonition against sin than an occasion for it. It is probably a sign of Renaissance times' (John Rylands Library). The same border pictures recur on many pages as the available metal plates were re-used. The border pictures in the two books are the same only in some instances. They follow the same pattern with a narrow floral border on the inside of the page inhabited mostly by grotesques, and pictures on the outer border, sometimes of scenes from the Bible, sometimes depicting grotesques. There are also verses in red in blocks in the borders: again they sometimes agree, but not always. These verses are often Biblical verses, with the scriptural reference, at other times secular verses in French. The borders are not coloured in either of the two books.



**Figure 5. The dance of death in Book 3d5. The picture is by artist 'A'. (National Library of South Africa)**

The 'skeletal spectre of death' (Cundall 1985) is very much in evidence in both Book 3d4 and Book 3d5. It appears on many pages in the border decorations as well as in some full-page illustrations.

The two books have the same picture of the Virgin with her emblems, on p. 158 in 3d4 and p. 157 of book 3d5. The same picture also appears in *Heures á l'usage de Rome*, Thielman Kerver, Paris 1505, in The Huntington Library, San Mario, California (Hall 1994 :119). These books printed by Kerver show the mirror as a symbol of the Virgin's purity. This originated from the Book of Wisdom 7:26: 'She is a reflection of the eternal light and a stainless mirror of God's majesty' and only became part of her iconography early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Thierney 2010).



**Figure 6. The Virgin with her emblems as it appears in Book 3d4. The lacy border can be seen at the bottom of the picture. The picture is by Artist 'A'. (National Library of South Africa)**

Two pages (one folio) are missing at the end of Book 3d4. This book has a very beautiful and almost intact nineteenth century binding. The loss must have occurred before it was bound. Two folios are also missing from Book 3d5. The one had on one side a picture of the flight to Egypt (p. 71) and had probably been torn out for the picture<sup>6</sup>, the other (p. 180/181) contained antiphons and prayers for St John the Baptist as well as St John Evangelist.

## Conclusion

Research on late medieval thinking and the ensuing changes following the invention of printing has neglected the importance of printed books of hours. Without taking into account the interaction between convention and innovation in the new printed editions, it is not possible to fully understand and evaluate the religious and cultural contents of the manuscript book of hours in its final appearance (Drigsdahl 2003). Spanning the transformation of manuscript to print, books of hours provided stability during a period of varying users and rival markets (Wieck 1997:51).

David McKitterick points out that there was no stage of transition from manuscript to print 'as if it were a finite process' and says that it is misleading to call it so (2003:47). Manuscript and printed books of hours were used together for a long time after the invention of printing and many households used both. Printed books were painted to resemble manuscripts, and texts derived from printed books were entered into manuscripts. Printed books of hours usually had more prayers and observances than the older manuscripts, therefore users of manuscripts copied printed material into them (Duffy 2006: 145).

The two hybrid books of hours in the Grey Collection of the National Library in Cape Town are therefore of considerable significance. The physical appearance as well as the contents of the books illustrates the interaction between tradition and new technology.

Duffy points out that the increase in popularity of the book of hours might be viewed 'as a triumph of literacy over rote devotion, the rise of the religion of the book at the expense, at least among the well-to-do, of less literate religion of the image or the bead' (2006:15). He argues, however, that this view is incorrect because image, bead and book continued to exist together, and to be used by the same people. He refers to illustrations of the time that depict books of hours in a religious environment that included, in no hierarchical order, the use of the rosary, devotional images, and the recitation of the liturgical office ( Duffy 2006:15).

Now, in 2013, e-books are becoming the more popular format in which people read books (Catone 2013). However, it does seem that, at least for the foreseeable future, e-books and print books can exist together. E-books are convenient, portable, provide a wide selection and incorporate multimedia, but they still lack some qualities of the printed book (Catone 2013). Ferris Jabr points out that screens and e-readers cannot substitute the tactile sense of reading on paper that is missed by readers. More importantly, readers cannot easily navigate lengthy texts. Such problems may obstruct comprehension. Screens may also exhaust the user more and make it more difficult to recollect what has been read (Jabr 2013). In the printed book the user has physical indications like facing pages as he/she progresses through the book. This assists in the understanding of narrative perspective. It is clear to the user holding

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<sup>6</sup> This apparently happened in the Cape Town Library, since Alexander, in his 1947 article, counts 18 photos in Book 3d5 (p. 109).



a book where one page relates to the rest of the narrative, facilitating comprehension of the meaning of the text (Baer 2013). Maria Popova says: ‘There is something increasingly reassuring today about the physicality of print books, about using one’s hands and fingers as well as one’s mind and brain as the instruments of reading’ (2013).

Michael Agresta, in an article in the online magazine *Slate*, predicts that although the paper book will survive, its cultural significance will change. ‘As it loses its traditional value as an efficient vessel for text, the paper book’s other qualities – from its role in literary history to its inimitable design possibilities to its potential for physical beauty – will take on more importance’, he says. Design-conscious authors who are interested in the design of their work will still create printed books, he points out. He cites examples of paratexts – illustrations, book covers, type settings and other aspects of a specific publication – that has unmistakably been intended by the author, for example: blank, black or marbled pages, of which Laurence Stern’s *Tristram Shandy* is a well-known example; the final period in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*; and clear choices such as upside down fonts, Braille script and words scored through (2012). Agresta discusses yet another way in which the paper book will survive that shows parallels to the survival of the book of hours. This is what he calls the ‘burgeoning category of “artist’s book”’ – meaning that aspects of the design of the book and the text are equally important. William Blake is here the well-known example and is often regarded as ‘the father of the genre’. To separate Blake’s text from its setting ‘is to lose an essential dimension of meaning and expression’ Agresta points out. Blake’s pictures, produced by a combination of engraving and hand-colouring, have endured, although print technologies have changed. Although books printed on paper may lose their use value as reading material and become collector’s objects, writers will be admitted to the art market, Agresta says (2012). Today, even single pages of books of hours fetch high prices on the art market. A glance at the advertisements of auction houses on the Internet will suffice. A single, ordinary printed page by Thielman Kerver, similar to those illustrated in this article, was offered for sale in 2012 for \$150 (Swaen 2012).

The book of hours has therefore witnessed – and survived – the information explosion of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and still survives today. Likewise, the printed book will (hopefully) survive the present-day information explosion.

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