

EIGHTEENMO IN NINES: AN EXPERIMENTAL TECHNIQUE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS NOTE is to report a bibliographical rarity — a book imposed in eighteens and gathered in nines. Previously, the technique has been described in relation to ‘stabbed’ books of the nineteenth century, and as a curiosity in the eighteenth.¹ The bibliographical details follow.²

Title-page: [one line of Hebrew] | LIBER | PSALMORUM | EDITUS | A | JOHANNE LEUSDEN, | LINGUAE SANCTAE in ACADEMIA ULTRAJECTINA | Professore ordinario. | [ornament] | LONDINI, | Typis S. PALMER. | Impensis R.&J.BONWICKE, B.BARKER, S.BALLARD, & J.BATLEY. | MDCCXXVI.

Collation: 18°; $\pi^3A-2C^92D^62E^4$; \$5 signed (F3 mis-signed ‘F2’). Ll.[3], 240, [4].

Press figures: 1 on H6^v, K6^r

3 on B1^v, C9^r

4 on E9^v, G4^v

5 on L3^r, M6^r, Q9^r, U6^r, Z6^r.

Hebrew and Latin texts are parallel; text, foliation and signatures proceed from back to front.³ The paper is unwatermarked, and all the chainlines are vertical.

A note to the binder indicates that the type was imposed in two ways. ‘The book-binder is to take especial notice that from signature A to Q inclusive there will be three single leaves in the folding, and in the remainder but one; as also, that the Title, Preface, &c. must be at the latter end, as in all Hebrew books.’ (2E4^r). This note is incorrect; in fact, gatherings A to P include three single leaves, and gatherings Q to 2C include only one single leaf.

All gatherings from A to P exhibit the same characteristics, which suggests they were imposed in the same way. Each gathering consists of three conjugate pairs of leaves with three single leaves inserted. Each single leaf has a small stub which is pasted to the verso of the previous leaf. In two gatherings the sewing is visible between the third and fourth leaves. All single leaves have tranchefiles. Where the chainlines slope, the angle is always in the same direction, which indicates that the pages of type were laid head to foot. Thus, the sheet is not folded but is simply cut. A typical imposition is illustrated (Fig.1), though many variations are possible. Having completed the white paper, the sheet could be perfected without transposing pages of type. When binding, the sheet is cut into twelve sections which make two gatherings. The simplicity of the imposition is off-set by the complexity of the gathering process.

As indicated in the note to the binder, gatherings Q–2C were probably imposed in a different manner. Each gathering consists of four conjugate pairs of leaves and a single leaf. The single leaf has a small stub which is pasted to the verso of the fourth leaf. Tranchefiles appear in the third, eighth and ninth leaves. Chainlines appear to meet at the top of two conjugate pairs in each gathering (i.e. leaves 1 and 9, and 2 and 8), which suggests that these leaves comprise a folded foursome. After much experimentation, an imposition scheme was found to fit.⁴ Fig.2 represents the arrangement of the pages of type upon the stone. Cuts are indicated by the dotted lines.

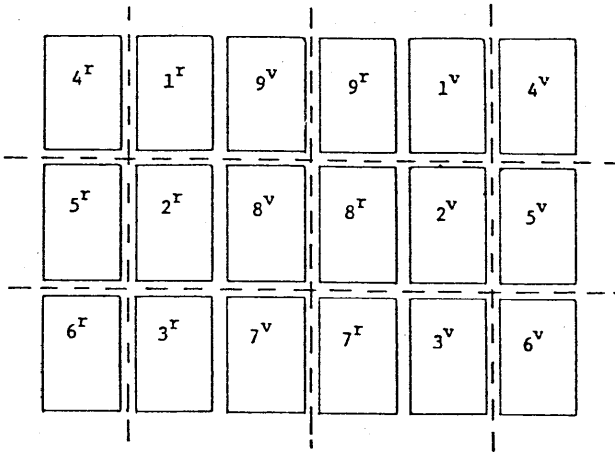
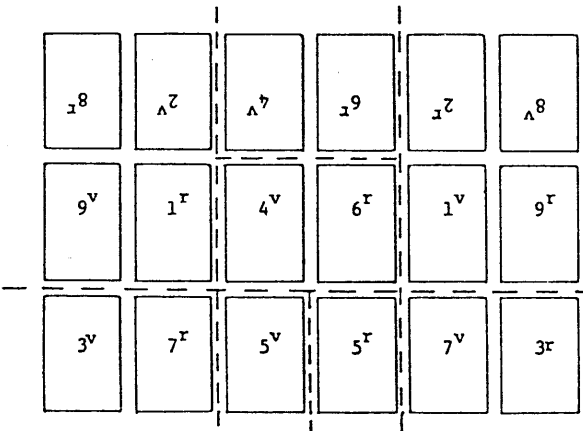
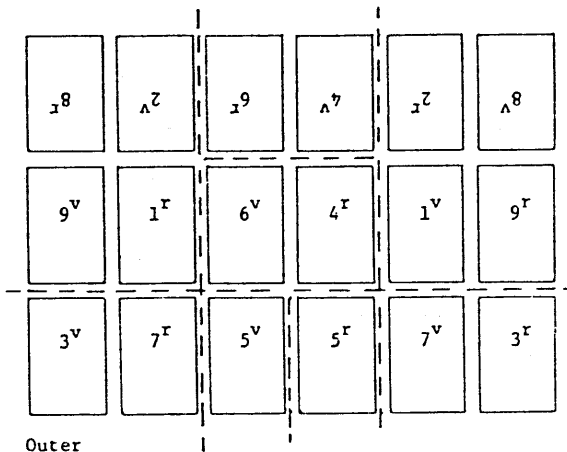


Fig.1



Inner



Outer

Fig.2

Having printed the white paper, type-pages 11 and 8 are put in place of 7 and 12, and 7 and 12 are put in place of 11 and 8. The sheet is then perfected. When gathering, the sheet is cut into eight sections which make up two gatherings, each comprising one foursome which is folded, two conjugate pairs which are inserted, and a single leaf which is inserted.

My contention is that the *Liber Psalmorum* (1726) represents a technical experiment by which Samuel Palmer hoped to advance his craft. In his time Palmer was recognised as a craftsman by no less a printer than Benjamin Franklin. Moreover, Palmer was chosen to supervise a private press set up by some of the Royal Family at St. James's in 1731, and he also undertook to write a *History of Printing*.⁵ His edition of Pemberton's *View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy* (1728) is an excellent example of his expertise.

Unlike another book gathered in nines — the Gaelic translation of Alleine's *Alarm to the unconverted*, published in 1781 — Leusden's *Liber Psalmorum* was not an eccentricity. It was first published in 1666 in both a Latin-Hebrew, and a Dutch-Hebrew text (*Liber Psalmorum; Het Hebreus Psalmorum*, both Amsterdam, 1666). Rev. Increase Mather, President of Harvard College, and John Eliot, 'apostle to the Indians in America,' instigated a new edition, with an English-Hebrew text, in 1688 (*The Book of Psalmes*, Utrecht, 1688). The same sheets, with a new title page, were published in London at this time. These two appear to be Wing B2744A and B2744 respectively. At the same time another Dutch-Hebrew edition was published, along with a Latin-Hebrew edition (*Het Hebreus Psalmboeck; Liber Psalmorum*, both Utrecht, 1688). The latter was the copy-text for the edition described here, and for a later edition which is apparently the last (*Liber Psalmorum*, London, 1757).

Within a period of ninety years, Leusden's *Liber Psalmorum* was published in at least eight editions on four separate occasions. It was aimed at three domestic markets — England, America, and the Low Countries — as well as being available in the international language. Clearly, the *Liber Psalmorum* was a product of the mainstream booktrade, making the curious production techniques all the more interesting.

The bibliographical characteristics of the *Liber Psalmorum* indicate its experimental nature. Gatherings A to P are imposed in a simple fashion, but the imposition creates delays and expense at the 'gathering' stage. Another imposition scheme was designed, with a view to saving time later in the process. This new scheme may well have been designed 'in-house' as it is basically different from traditional schemes which locate the first leaf in a corner position. Imposition in eighteens is, itself, experimental at this time.

Palmer's experimental imposition schemes were not accepted into the printer's canon, but the inclination to experiment is an important attribute of the

craftsman; especially when seen in the perspective of Fernand Braudel who points out that not all advances in technology are revolutionary:

Technology is also those unnumberable actions which certainly have no innovating significance but which are the fruit of accumulated knowledge: the sailor fixing his ropes, the miner digging his gallery, the peasant behind his plough, the smith at his anvil.⁷

We might add the printer at his press.

Brian Hubber,
Canberra.

NOTES

¹ Philip Gaskell, *A new introduction to bibliography* (Oxford, 1972), p.329. For 'stabbed' books see Jacob Blanck, 'Salmagundi and its publisher,' *PBSA*, 41(1947), 1-32. Hector Macdonald, 'A book gathered in nines,' *Bibliothek*, 7(1974), 76-8, describes a Gaelic translation of Alleine's *Alarm to the unconverted* published in 1781 by Macfarquhar and Elliot.

² A copy of the *Liber Psalmorum* (1726) is in the Jesuit Collection at the Joint Theological Library, Ormond College, University of Melbourne. The present note is the result of recent cataloguing for the Australia and New Zealand Early Imprints Project.

³ Because the *Liber Psalmorum* is signed from back to front, reference notation is a problem. Glaister (*Glaister's glossary of the book*, 2nd ed. (London, 1979), p.411, 501) defines recto as appearing on the right, and verso on the left; but he is apparently thinking of Western language books as he qualifies his definition by explaining that rectos have odd page numbers. The right-hand side in a Hebrew book has an even number. Glasiter's definition is clearly faulty. There is no guidance from the standard bibliographical manuals; so, for the purposes of this note, the following definition has been adopted. Rectos will be on that side on which signatures appear. Versos will be on the other side. Consequently, in the book described here, rectos are on the left, versos on the right.

⁴ Imposition schemes for eighteens in half-sheet given in W.Savage, *A dictionary of the art of printing* (London, 1841), nos. 67-72, were systematically tested. None produced the required characteristics, though no.72 is similar in that it produces four conjugate pairs and a single leaf.

⁵ See H.R. Plomer, *Dictionary of the printers and booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668 to 1725* (Oxford, 1922), pp.228-9.

⁶ The Latin text follows the version of Santis Pagnini which was current in the 17th and early 18th centuries.

⁷ Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and material life 1400-1800*, trans. Miriam Kochan (New York, 1973), p.224.

A 'HIDDEN' KAESTNER TYPE SPECIMEN

A CATALOGUE RECENTLY ISSUED by the Antiquariaat Frits Knuf contained the following specimen of bookbinders' brass type:

Kaestner, Otto. Graviranstalt und Messingschriftenfabrik-Krefeld. Katalog A: Messing-Schriften für die Vergoldepresse, aus harter Bronze. No date. (ca. 1900). 358pp. 8vo. Orpict. cloth.
An early and very rich specimen, printed in red and black . . .¹

A similar item was subsequently listed by Peter Tinsley of Antique Bookshop & Curios, Sydney, in his second Walter Stone Collection Catalogue:

(Type specimens) Katalog über Messingschriften für die Vergoldepresse. n.p. n.d. c.1930's. 358pp. or. dec.cl.²

These two specimens were issued to provide a display of the range of brass types available to bookbinders for the lettering of bindings, and are similar to those

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