HANDLIST OF EXHIBITS

On May 1, the Princeton University Library opened an exhibition marking the 400th anniversary of an important event in the history of the English Bible. In 1604, English bishops, Puritan leaders and other churchmen convened by James I gathered at Hampton Court Palace for the purpose of determining "things pretended to be amiss in the church." One result was the renowned King James Bible, first published seven years later. For more than two and a half centuries following no other authorized translation was made. The millions of copies printed over the years witness to its standing not only as generally acceptable to English readers of whatever denomination but also as a monument of the English language.

To celebrate this special date, the Princeton University Library is exhibiting more than sixty early English Bibles. Dating before the King James, the earliest Bibles in the show demonstrate the tumultuous political and literary history leading up to that translation. They include manuscript copies of the Wycliffite Bible, considered the earliest complete renderings of the Scriptures into English. Although appearing as early as the 1380s, the Wycliffite Bibles were banned in 1408 by an ecclesiastical act. Even though printing in England started in 1470s, no part of the English Bible was printed before 1525, no complete Bible before 1535, and none in England before 1538. The first printings, also on display, were the translations of William Tyndale, once chaplain to a noble family who fled to Hamburg because there was "no place to do [the translation] in all of englond." Although deemed "untrue translations" Tyndale’s work served as foundation for subsequent English versions, such as those of Miles Coverdale (1535), Thomas Matthew...
(1537), the Great Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1590) and the Bishop's Bible (1568). Visitors can see rare copies of these Bibles in the exhibition.

Princeton is one of the very few universities in the world capable of mounting an historic English Bible exhibition from collections on its campus. This distinction is due to the presence here of the Scheide Library, a treasure collection gathered over the past one hundred and twenty five years by three generations. The Bibles on display were gathered chiefly by John Hinsdale Scheide, Class of 1896, son of the Library’s founder, William Taylor Scheide, and father of the present owner, William Hurd Scheide, Class of 1936. Princeton is grateful to Mr. Scheide for making their display possible.

Two of the other libraries capable of producing this exhibition from their own collections are also doing so. Preceding the Princeton exhibition was that at the Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University. Subsequent to the Princeton show will be that mounted by the John Rylands Library, Manchester University.

Available at the exhibition is a new illustrated study of the English Bible: Let It Go Among Our People: An Illustrated History of the Bible in English from Wyclif to the King James Bible, published by Lutterworth Press in Cambridge, England and written by David Price, Associate Professor of History at SMU and Charles C. Ryrie, Professor of Theology, Emeritus at Dallas Theological Seminary.

The exhibition is open free to the public from May 1 through August 8, 2004 in the main gallery of the Firestone Library, Princeton University, One Washington Road, Princeton, NJ 08544. Hours: Weekdays, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Wednesday evenings, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.; and weekends, 12 noon - 5:00 p.m. Summer visiting hours starting on June 7 are weekdays, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; Wednesday evenings, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.; Weekends, 12 noon - 5:00 p.m. Further information available at Email: rbsc@princeton.edu Telephone: (609) 258 3184.

N.B. The text of the following book labels was prepared by Paul Needham, Scheide Librarian. Stephen Ferguson, Curator of Rare Books, Princeton University Library, prepared the labels for the maps, prints, and other items.
Queen Elizabeth died 24 March 1603 and was succeeded by King James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England. The new king convened the Hampton Court Conference, 14-16 January 1604, to hear different perspectives on the state of the Church of England. Members of the Privy Council, high Anglican churchmen, and the king invited four representatives of the English Puritan movement to discuss their grievances.

James showed little concern for any of the Puritan issues except for a motion made by John Reynolds: “may your Majesty be pleased to direct that the Bible be now translated, such versions as are now extant not answering to the original” (p. 45). It was a surprising motion and the King’s response was even more surprising: he endorsed it enthusiastically.

Barlow gives an eyewitness account of the Hampton Court Conference. He soon became head of the Second Westminster Company of translators for the King James Version; until his death in 1607, John Reynolds had a leading role in the First Oxford Company.

STC 1456. Rare Book Collection (Henry N. Paul, Princeton 1884)

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The first edition of the King James Version, published seven years after the Hampton Court conference. It proved to be the most successful Bible in any living language, a “monument more lasting than bronze.”

It was also a summation of a century of scholarship and artistry. The translators stated that their goal was to converge the strengths of the entire history of translating the Bible into one standard version.

In the prefatory Translators to the Reader, Miles Smith wrote: “Truly, good Christian Reader, we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, ... but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one.”

STC 2216. Scheide Library (1931)

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Wycliffite Bible. Manuscript on vellum, ca. 1400

The first complete translation of the Bible into English emerged from a heretical movement—the Wycliffite or Lollard movement. One result of this unusual origin was that the English Bible was outlawed at the Oxford and London synods of 1407-9.

Despite the official ban, the Wycliffite translation survives in over two hundred
complete or fragmentary manuscripts, most of them postdating the ban. It has more manuscript witnesses than any other Middle English text.

This is the only complete Wycliffite Bible manuscript in America. This copy is, moreover, one of only five to contain the complete General Prologue, an important treatise which has been described as being both “a scholarly introduction, and a polemical Lollard pamphlet.”

In Elizabethan times it was in the family of Thomas Norton (1532–1584), son-in-law of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, and joint author of the Tragedy of Gorboduc (1561). In another capacity, Norton became a vigorous and virulent inquisitor and torturer of English Catholics. Later he was himself imprisoned in the Tower for his anti-episcopal Calvinism. Next to his name in this volume he wrote or had written for him, just five weeks before his death, the annotation, “the honestest & faythfulest & lovingest subject in England to our gracious Quene & Soveraigne Lady Elizabeth teste se ipsa.”

Scheide Library (M 12: 1931)

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Manuscripts of the Wycliffite New Testament or Gospels only are much more common than those of the complete Bible. Some were written in very small hands as portable, and even concealable, miniature books, less than 4 inches tall.

This copy is handsomely and professionally written, with good quality illuminated initials and border pieces. In keeping with Lollard principles, no pictures are incorporated in the initials, such as were in the common tradition of Latin Bible manuscripts. On an original flyleaf is an ownership inscription: “To master walter mersche in mylkstrete.”

Scheide Library (M 13: 1914)

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Bible, Latin (Vulgate Bible). Manuscript on vellum, Paris, c. 1235-45

In the early Christian centuries various Latin translations were made of the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old and New Testaments. In the Middle Ages, the dominant Latin version became the so-called Vulgate, whose nucleus was the Latin translations made by St. Jerome in the late fourth to early fifth centuries A.D. In the early thirteenth century, a semi-standardized text of the Vulgate was formed in the ambiance of the University of Paris. Besides containing various distinctive readings, the “Paris Bibles” became quite fixed in the order of books and associated prologues, and in their chapter divisions — essentially, the same chaptering we continue to observe today. The Paris Vulgate was the source for the Wycliffite Middle English translations.

Many thirteenth-century copies of the Vulgate are of high quality, with fine illuminated initials containing miniature scenes appropriate to their respective Bible books. The present Vulgate is characteristic of these. The illuminations were
done in an anonymous Paris shop known as the Soissons atelier. At the opening shown, the initial I marks the beginning of Esther; it depicts King Ahasuerus above, and the hanging of Haman below.

Scheide Library (M 7: 1899)


First printed edition of the Wycliffite Bible. The work was edited by a Kentish clergyman, John Lewis (1675-1747), who contributed a lengthy preface on early editions of the English Bible. Lewis also published biographies of Wycliffe, of Sir Thomas More, and of the first English printer, William Caxton. His edition of the Wycliffite New Testament was based on two manuscripts, one of which he owned, and the other he borrowed. They survive, and are now in the Bodleian Library and Cambridge University Library respectively.

Lewis’s edition was published by subscription; two rare prospectuses survive. It has been said that only 160 copies were printed.

Rare Book Collection


John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments, or Book of Martyrs, remains a significant source for the history of English Protestantism, and is compellingly readable besides. This copy is open to the account and representation of the execution of William Tyndale. Tyndale had been living on the continent since the 1520s, particularly in Antwerp. In May 1535 he was lured out of safety by a pretended Protestant, Henry Philippes, and was arrested by officers of Emperor Charles V. It is known that while in prison he requested the use of his Hebrew Bible, grammar and dictionary, so that he could continue his translating. In early October 1536, in the prison of Vilvorde near Brussels, Tyndale was strangled and burned.

STC 11222. Scheide Library (1939)


Engraved portrait of William Tyndale by the Utrecht artist Crispijn van de Passe (ca. 1565-1637). This engraving became the source for all likenesses of William Tyndale. Unfortunately, it is not authentic. The artist used the features of the Scottish reformer John Knox. We do not know anything about the physical appearance of Tyndale.

The author-publisher Henry Holland was the son of Philemon Holland, Elizabethan translator of Pliny the Elder, Plutarch, and Suetonius.

STC 13582. Grenville Kane Collection

Of the first edition of Tyndale’s New Testament, probably printed in Worms in 1526, only three copies survive, one seriously incomplete, one lacking the title-page (both in London), and one complete and in fine condition (in Stuttgart).

This second edition was carefully revised by Tyndale. Anne Boleyn’s copy, specially printed on vellum, is in the British Library. This copy was printed on saffron-stained paper. This appears to reflect an English collecting fashion of the 1530s, when also, occasionally, books were printed on green-stained paper.

STC 2826. Scheide Library (1912)


First edition of the New Testament in Greek, with Latin translation by Erasmus; a milestone in the history of the Bible, of significance comparable to that of the Gutenberg Bible. It was reprinted in 1518 and 1522. Erasmus’s accompanying Latin translation followed the Vulgate, but with countless modifications, both to bring it into conformity with the Greek text, and to smooth out awkward locutions. Part II of the edition was a 400-page detailed, chapter by chapter commentary on the Greek text.

Erasmus’s edition was the source for Luther’s and Tyndale’s translations. In his introductory “Paraclesis”, Erasmus stated his advocacy of vernacular translations, so that the Bible could be read by everyone, from the Irish and the Scots, to the Turks and Saracens: “Christ wants his mysteries published as openly as possible. I would even that the lowliest women read the Gospels and the Pauline letters… I would that the farmer sing portions … at the plough, the weaver hum some parts of them to the movement of the shuttle, the traveler lighten the weariness of the journey with stories of this kind. Let the conversations of every Christian be drawn from this source.”

Scheide Library (1912)


Tyndale’s third revision, completed shortly before his capture. Of seven surviving copies, all imperfect, two are in the Scheide collection. Both are on saffron-stained paper. This copy is apparently the only one to preserve the calendar mentioned on the title-page. It lists saints’ days in the manner of traditional Catholic calendars, and also the entry of the sun into the various signs of the zodiac. It will be noted that an English reader has scratched out the name of the
pope wherever it appears, in accordance with a proclamation of Henry VIII following his split from the Roman church.

STC 2830. Scheide Library (1939)


Tyndale’s third revision. This copy belonged to Thomas Herbert, 8th Earl of Pembroke (1656-1733), former president of the Royal Society and one of the greatest book collectors of his age.

This copy is opened (left hand page, “The Pater noster”) to the Lord’s Prayer. In his 1534 revision, followed here in 1535, Tyndale added to the prayer the concluding phrase “For thyne is the kyngedome and the power, and the glorye for euer”, which did not appear in his 1526 version. He found it attested in Erasmus’s Greek New Testament; and from Tyndale it made its way into the King James version.

It is now believed that this phrase, though found in other ancient Christian writings, was interpolated into Matthew’s gospel. In the Revised Version of 1881 it was removed and relegated to a side-note.

STC 2830. Scheide Library (1939)

[Miles Coverdale]. Biblia The Byble: that is, the holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament. [Cologne: E. Cervicornus & J. Soter], 4 October 1535. Fol.

First edition of the first complete English Bible, translated by Miles Coverdale (1488-1568), a former Augustinian friar. Coverdale dedicated his translation to Henry VIII. Most of the circumstances of Coverdale’s translation are unclear or uncertain, though he seems to have been partly under the support of an Antwerp citizen, Jacob van Meteren. Coverdale also had connections with Henry VIII’s chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, by whose recommendation Coverdale’s version was allowed to be imported into England. Whereas Tyndale worked from the original languages, Coverdale used a variety of secondary sources: Tyndale’s own Pentateuch and New Testament, the German versions of Luther and Zwingli, the Latin Vulgate, and the Latin translation of the Hebrew made by the Catholic scholar Santi Pagnini.

Although some three dozen or more copies of the Coverdale Bible survive, none is complete. Heavy reading led to the loss of leaves at the beginning and end of nearly every survivor. At the opening displayed, the left-hand page is in facsimile.

STC 2063. Scheide Library (1911)

[“Thomas Matthew” (i.e., William Tyndale & John Rogers)]. The Byble, which is all the holy Scripture: ... truly and purely translated into Englysh by Thomas Matthew. [Antwerp:...

The so-called Matthew Bible, handsomely produced and in large format, emerged as a competitor to Coverdale’s. The name of Thomas Matthew is a pseudonym: the editor and part-translator was John Rogers, chaplain of the English merchants’ house at Antwerp and a long-time acquaintance of Tyndale. In 1555, under the reign of Queen Mary, Rogers became the first of some three hundred Protestants to be burned alive. The Matthew Bible incorporates all of Tyndale’s extant Bible translations, including the long section from Joshua through II Chronicles, which had not appeared in print before. The parts Tyndale did not translate were revised by Rogers from other sources, especially Coverdale’s version.

In August 1537, Archbishop Cranmer wrote to Cromwell that he liked this version “better than any other translacion hertofore made,” and, via Cromwell, Henry VIII allowed it to be sold in England alongside the less expensive Coverdale version.

STC 2066. Scheide Library (1939)


The “September Testament”: the first edition of Luther’s version of the New Testament, and the first vernacular translation to be based on the Greek text. In its highly personal prefaces and marginal notes, and its very layout, Luther’s New Testament broke decisively with the existing tradition of printed German Bibles. It caused an immediate sensation. The edition, estimated at 3,000 copies, sold out quickly, and a close reprint was published in December 1522.

For William Tyndale, Luther’s translation was a constant companion. Tyndale’s New Testament incorporated Luther’s view of the canon, and included modified translations of Luther’s prefaces to individual books. These would have introduced many English readers for the first time to the core of Luther’s doctrines, particularly that of justification by faith alone. Luther referred to the Epistle of James, with its emphasis on good works (2:17, “So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead”) as a “letter of straw.”

Scheide Library (1912)


First edition of Luther’s Pentateuch. It is not known which edition of the Hebrew Bible was Tyndale’s base text, but it is clear that he also used Luther’s translation. Even some elements of the design of Tyndale’s 1530 Pentateuch go back to Luther’s book.

Even before the New Testament had been pulled off the presses, Luther took on the more challenging task of translating the Hebrew Scriptures. This edition was completed less than a year after the “September Testament”, first
appearing ca. July 1523. The woodcut title border was designed by Georg Lemberger. It had previously been used in a 1522 Roman Missal for which, with its crucifixion scene, it was more obviously appropriate. On the other hand, in the Pentateuch preface, Luther stated that the reader will find Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Scheide Library (1983)

Thomas More. A dyaloge of syr Thomas More knyghte: ... Wheryn be treatyd dyuers maters, as of the veneracyon & worshyp of ymagys & relyques, prayng to sayntis, & goyng on pylgrymage. Wyth many other thyngys touchyng the pestylent secte of Luther & Tyndale, by the tone bygone in Saxony, & by the tother laboryd to be brought in to England. ¶ Newly ouersene ... London: [William Rastell], May 1531 (1530 on title-page). Fol.

Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England (as of 1529) and martyr-saint of the Roman Catholic Church (as of 1935), was in his early days England’s leading humanist scholar, a champion of Erasmus, and author of the greatest work of English humanism, Utopia (1516). Nonetheless, More became the fiercest opponent of Tyndale, his Bible translations, and all Protestant thought. He published blistering attacks on Luther and Tyndale, objecting, as far as Tyndale was concerned, to heresy in the English translations. While More was responsible for the execution of some Protestants, he had no role in Tyndale’s killing. On 6 July 1535, More himself was executed on trumped-up charges of treason, arising from his refusal to sign Henry VIII’s Act of Succession (1534).

Second edition; of the first edition, 1529, only a handful of copies survive.

STC 18085. Rare Books Collection.

The title-page woodcut border shows Henry enthroned, receiving the “Verbum Dei” (word of God) from the translators. He hands a Bible to Thomas Cromwell on the right and to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer on the left; in the
lower register, a numerous populace repeats, “Vivat Rex” – Long Live the King.

STC 2068. Scheide Library (1914)

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Second edition of the Great Bible, but the first with the preface by Thomas Cranmer. Some copies give Richard Grafton’s name as printer, and some, as here, that of his Bible partner, Edward Whitchurch.

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), Archbishop of Canterbury from 1532 to 1553 and a martyr under Queen Mary, was a principal architect of the English Reformation. Under Edward VI, he created the _Book of Common Prayer_ (1549, 1552). His most notable writing from the first, tentative phase of the English Reformation, under Henry VIII, was his preface to the Great Bible, with its strong advocacy of lay access to Scripture. Cranmer urged universal vernacular Bible reading but also insisted that the reader accept the established norms of the faith. He cautioned against “tongue itch,” “exquisite judgments,” “sophistry or talking craft,” and “babblers.”

STC 2070. Scheide Library (1937)

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_The newe testament both Latine and Englyshe …Faythfully translated by Myles Coverdale_. [Zurich: Christoph Froschauer] for Andrew Hester, London, 16 August 1550. 4to.

The last reprint of the 1535 Coverdale Bible to appear during the translator’s life. It is a noteworthy sign of the flux of Bible culture in the reign of Edward VI that Coverdale’s version still found a market, long after Coverdale himself had assembled, in the Great Bible, a more authoritative text. The main text was printed in Zurich and exported to London, where the title and preliminaries were printed. A single copy, in the Zurich Public Library, preserves a different set of preliminary leaves from Froschauer’s shop.

STC 2080. Scheide Library (1942)
Sixth edition of the Great Bible. Thomas Cromwell, the leading figure behind the Great Bible, had once been so influential with Henry VIII that, like Cardinal Wolsey before him, he was in essence the viceroy. But when he fell from favor, he fell hard. He negotiated as part of a plan of alliance with Germany’s Lutheran princes, a marriage of Henry to Anne, sister of the duke of Cleves. Henry found her so unappealing that he was unable to consummate the marriage, and shortly after he found his ear receptive to the complaints of Cromwell’s enemies. Parliament obediently voted Cromwell guilty of treason without trial, and he was beheaded in July 1540. An eminent historian has written, “of the judicial murders sanctioned by Henry this was perhaps the least intelligible.”

Cromwell’s fall from grace is effectively symbolized on the title-page border of the Great Bibles printed in 1541: Cromwell’s arms, on the right side of the middle register, were cut out of the woodblock, leaving a conspicuous blank circle.

Edward VI was only nine years old when he succeeded his father, Henry VIII, in 1547; he died of tuberculosis in 1553. He was a precocious student, and a convinced Protestant. Under two regency councils, led successively by Edward Seymour and John Dudley, Edward’s government promoted far-reaching Protestant reforms, including a much wider dissemination of the Bible in English. Altogether, some forty Bible editions would be printed during his reign. These included, as here, a number of editions reviving Tyndale’s version of the New Testament, in preference to the text of the Great Bible.

The Bible was reprinted in many different forms under Edward VI: there was no agreement on an authoritative English text. This edition is a reprint of the 1537 “Matthew” (Tyndale & Rogers) Bible. It includes a reprint also of Tyndale’s Preface to Jonah, from an Antwerp edition of 1531 that survives in a single copy. The edition was edited by Edward Becke, who dedicated it to Edward VI. Becke is an obscure figure, apparently of Kent. He also published an English translation of two Erasmus dialogues, and a crude verse pamphlet against “Joan of Kent,” an unfortunate woman, perhaps deranged, who was burned alive in London in May 1550 on a charge of Anabaptism.

One of three editions in Edward’s reign that printed Tyndale’s version in parallel columns with Erasmus’s Latin translation. These replaced the earlier English-Latin New Testaments that used Coverdale’s version. This edition added an English version of Erasmus’s “exhortation,” i.e. his preface to his Greek-Latin New Testament.

STC 2093. Scheide Library (1913)


First edition of the “Geneva” Bible, the most influential English Bible before the King James version. The Old Testament was a careful revision of that of the Great Bible, the New Testament a revision of Whittingham’s 1557 New Testament, with extensive consultation both of Hebrew and Greek texts, and of scholarly Latin translations of those texts made by Sebastian Münster, Sebastian Castellio, Santi Pagnini, and Theodore Beza. In terms of their closer acquaintance with the best Biblical scholarship, the Marian exiles benefited from their enforced continental sojourn. Like the 1557 New Testament, the 1560 Geneva full Bible was in Roman type with supplied translation-words in italics, and used Estienne’s verse-numbers. The prefatory material and side-notes are distinctly Calvinist.

The title-page woodcut shows the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, a fitting image for an exiled people about to return to their homeland. The scriptural quotations bordering the woodcut also speak to their plight, consoling them with the idea that they will prevail through God’s aid. By the time the Geneva Bible was published, Queen Mary had died, and was succeeded by her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth.

When Edward VI died, July 1553, he was succeeded by his twenty-two-year-older half sister Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon. Princess Mary had remained a firm Catholic, and she was determined to reunite England with the Roman church, releasing the country from its excommunication. Her fervor increased after her dynastic marriage to Philip of Spain, which brought with it Spanish religious advisors devoted to the methods of the Inquisition. Besides the hundreds of Protestants burned under her policy, hundreds of others fled to the
continent, taking up residence in Frankfurt, Zurich, Geneva and elsewhere.

Among the many learned exiles, William Whittingham took a leading role in Geneva, where he was strongly supported by his friend John Calvin, whose wife’s sister he apparently married. Whittingham’s 1557 New Testament marked a strong break with earlier English Bible printing. It is the first English Bible to be printed in Roman type; it numbered the verses, in the manner of Robert Estienne’s Greek-Latin New Testament of 1551; and it began the tradition, continued into the King James Bible, of italicizing words required for the English sense but not found in the original language.

STC 2871. Scheide Library (1917)

Estienne’s elegant pocket New Testament was the first to number the verses within each chapter — today, we would find any Bible in any language without numbered verses to be an oddity. The numbering was Estienne’s solution to his wish to provide a precise match-up of the Greek text with the two Latin versions that bracketed it: the Vulgate on the left, and Erasmus’s translation on the right.

Estienne was of the middle generation of a great dynasty of scholar-printers which arose in Paris. He had already printed in Paris major Bible editions in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, to the growing suspicion of the ultra-conservative Sorbonne theologians. He moved his shop to Geneva to escape this hostile and potentially dangerous atmosphere.

Scheide Library (1927)

The first Bible printed in Scotland. The work – naturally, in view of Scotland’s presbyterian movement, the Geneva Bible – was dedicated by the General Assembly to King James VI, then only thirteen. His life had been spent under a series of tumultuous feudal regencies since the age of one, when his mother Mary, Queen of Scots, had been forced to abdicate. The General Assembly was the chief counter-balance to the near-anarchy of Scotland’s territorial lords. The Assembly required all parish churches to acquire a copy of the new Bible, paying £4-13-4 for a copy, and well-off citizens and landholders were also ordered to buy it.

STC 2125. Scheide Library (1924)

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STC 2125. Scheide Library (1924)
Archbishop of Canterbury. Parker divided responsibility for revising the Great Bible text among his bishops. They were “to follow the common English translation used in the churches and not to recede from it but where it varyeth manifestly from the Hebrew or Greek original”; and also, in obvious contrast to the Geneva Bible, “to make no bitter notes upon any text.” The initials of the revisers were printed at the end of each book.

As a physical production, the Bishops’ Bible was the handsomest and most sumptuous edition so far printed. The title-page engraved portrait of Queen Elizabeth is a striking document of Tudor royal iconography. The queen is accompanied by allegorical figures of Faith and Charity, thus making Elizabeth implicitly the figure of Hope (1 Corinthians 13:13).

STC 2099. Scheide Library (1920)

[Rheims-Douai version]. The Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ, translated faithfully into English, out of the authentical Latin ... diligently conferred with the Greeke and other editions. Rheims: John Fogny, 1582. 4to.

First edition of the Rheims New Testament, the first English translation for Roman Catholics. A group of Roman Catholic exiles under William (later Cardinal) Allen formed a seminary in Douai in 1568. In the later 1570s it became a Jesuit college, but was forced by local suspicions to relocate temporarily to Rheims. Within the college the important task of an English translation of the Vulgate text was deputed to Gregory Martin, who had earlier been at St. John’s Oxford with Edmund Campion.

By Catholic dogma, the Vulgate Latin was the official Bible, considered to be, for the New Testament, “truer than the vulgar Greek itself.” The Catholic exiles realized that an English version of the Vulgate was essential for its priests, partly to have an official text to quote before “heretics”, who were avidly reading the Tyndale, Geneva, and Bishops’ versions. Martin’s pious adherence to the Vulgate led to a number of awkward phrases in English. For
instance, at Philippians 2:10 he wrote that at the name of Jesus “every knee bow of the celestials, terrestrials, and infernals” (Geneva: “should every knee bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the ground”). But he was too good a scholar to be able to ignore the Greek text entirely. The side notes and other reader guides provide a lengthy argument with Protestant heretics.

STC 2884. Scheide Library (1912)

[Rheims-Douai version]. The Holie Bible faithfully translated into English, out of the authentical Latin. Douai: Lawrence Kellam, 1609, 1610. 4to.

First edition of the Douai-Rheims Old Testament. According to the preface of the Rheims New Testament, Gregory Martin had already finished the translation of the Old Testament by 1582, the year he died. The College, however, suffered from a “lack of good means to publish the whole”; Martin’s work lay fallow for almost a generation before it was sent to be printed. In the meantime, the Vulgate text had been revised under pope Sixtus V (1587), then again under Clement VIII (1592), the latter becoming the official Roman Catholic Bible. Cardinal Allen was extensively involved in the Clementine revisions. Martin’s Old Testament version was correspondingly revised to ensure a strict conformity with the Clementine text.

The first verses of Genesis show both the strength and the weakness of the principle of word to word translation. Douai has “darkness was upon the face of the depth” (tenebrae super faciem abyssi), but then God’s fiat lux becomes “Be light made” instead of Geneva’s “Let there be light”, suggesting that God’s command of English idiom was rather shaky.

STC 2207. Scheide Library (1922)


English Protestants saw the Rheims New Testament as a direct attack. The job of refuting it fall on the shoulders of William Fulke, a Cambridge theologian of extreme puritanical principles, much admired for the violence of his invectives.

Fulke’s reply, which appeared the year of his death, took the form of a publication of the Rheims and Bishops’ versions side by side, with a fierce point-by-point exposé of the faults of the former. Fulke’s work was very influential in England, and was part of the working apparatus of the King James translators. It also had the unintended effect of spreading the Rheims version widely in England. The Rheims edition itself was under a ban in England, but courtesy of Fulke’s refutation, the text itself became widely available.

STC 2888. Scheide Library (1924)

[Anglo-Saxon]. The Gospels of the fower Evangelistes in the olde Saxons tyme … into the
vulgare toung of the Saxons. London: John Day, 1571. 4to.

First edition of the Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, printed under the supervision of Archbishop Matthew Parker. In the years before Elizabeth’s accession Parker had been chaplain to Anne Boleyn, and master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; in the Marian years, as a known Protestant, he was able to avoid exile to the continent, though he lived clandestinely. His high reputation for good judgment and probity led to his appointment under Elizabeth as Archbishop of Canterbury, an office he tried to avoid.

Parker was active in preserving ancient manuscripts following Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, and particularly in preserving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. He commissioned from the printer John Day a special Anglo-Saxon type fount, as found here in the Gospels. The edition was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth by John Foxe, the martyrologist. The Anglo-Saxon text was printed in parallel columns with that of the Bishops’ Bible. The source manuscript is now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

The edition was more than antiquarian. Like many other moderate English Protestants, Parker saw the Anglican church (as it became) as essentially a return to the purer days and ways of pre-Conquest England. Among these ways was the English church’s openness to vernacular translations of scripture. In the preface to the 1568 Bishops’ Bible, Parker wrote “… it was used among the Saxons, to have in their Churches read the four Gospels,” and that the Anglo-Saxon kings and bishops were “desirous … of old time to have the lay sort edified in godliness by reading in their vulgar tongue.”

STC 2961. Scheide Library (1924)


With engraved portrait of James by Simon van de Pas. As with his English royal cousin Elizabeth, James’s childhood was spent essentially without parents. But like Elizabeth, James was highly intelligent and received a strong humanist education. Although awkward and uncharming in social communications, James was highly confident of his ability to shed light in any intellectual discourse. He was a prolific writer in English and Latin on many topics, including demons and witches, and the divine right of kings: he believed firmly in both. He anticipated by centuries the Surgeon General’s warnings in his 1604 pamphlet A Counter-blaste to Tobacco, in which he urged his citizenry to resist this “stinking suffumigation.” It was not, he warned, as vulgarly believed, a preservative against the pox. Those who smoked tobacco were only imitating the “barbarous and beastly manners of the wild, godless, and slavish Indians.”

STC 14344. Rare Book Collection

The translators of the King James Bible were organized into six committees, two each at Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford. The best-known of the translators today is Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), successively bishop of Chichester, Ely, and Winchester, and president of the first Westminster committee, responsible for the Old Testament through I Chronicles. In his time he had the highest reputation for his piety, his deep patristic learning, and his eloquent sermons: an “angel in the pulpit.” This reputation was renovated by T. S. Eliot’s influential collection of essays, *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928). Andrewes’ sermons were collected and published posthumously, in 1629. This is the third edition.

STC 609. Rare Book Collection


John Overall, former Regius Professor of Theology at Cambridge, became Dean of St. Paul’s in 1602. He was second in dignity on Lancelot Andrewes’s committee. His 1606 “Convocation Book” remained unpublished for over eighty years. King James had asked the Canterbury Convocation to draft a set of opinions on civil government that might give support to the struggles of the Dutch protestant republic against the rule of Spain. However, when the Convocation, following the royal hint, suggested that a successive rebellion could have divine sanction, James felt that this undermined one of his dearest tenets, the divine right of kings. The entire set of canons, kept in Overall’s autograph, was suppressed.

Wing O-607. Rare Book Collection


First edition of the King James Version, published seven years after the Hampton Court conference. It proved to be the most successful Bible in any living language, a “monument more lasting than bronze.”

The engraved title-page, by Cornelius Boel, presents an unusually complex iconography, synthesizing the Hebrew sacred name, the dove of the Holy Ghost, and the Lamb of God; the tents of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles; Moses and Aaron; the four evangelists in the act of writing. The medallion at the foot of the page represents a pelican “in its piety” – by medieval tradition, the pelican was thought to peck its own breast to feed its young, and hence to be an emblem of Christ’s sacrifice.

STC 2216. Scheide Library (1931)


First edition of the King James Version. The woodcut border on the New Testament title-page was old stock: Barker had used it in his 1602 large folio edition of the Bishops’ Bible.
The first quarto edition of the King James version, with engraved title-border reduced from the large border of the folio first edition. The King James version was an immediate success, and in the following years many editions were published in smaller formats, moving the Bible, so to speak, off the church lecterns and into the hands of private readers. A few more editions of the Geneva Bible were printed, but generally speaking, English readers found in the King James version an adequate replacement.

STC 2219. Scheide Library (1916)

Της καινῆς διαθήκης απαντα. Ευαγγελιον. 

Estienne’s 1550 folio Greek New Testament was both the most beautiful and textually the most influential edition printed in the sixteenth century. It was edited by Robert’s son Henri, one of the finest Greek scholars of his age. In the inner margin is an apparatus of variant readings, keyed to individual Greek manuscripts including a number that were borrowed from the French royal library. One of the sigla must represent the famous fifth-century Greek-Latin Codex Bezae. This manuscript of the Gospels and Acts came into the hands of the Geneva scholar Theodore Beza, who in 1581 donated it to Cambridge University.

The English scholar Richard Bentley later wrote that by this edition Estienne became the “Protestant Pope,” and that its authority could hardly have been greater if one of the apostles had been its compositor. It remained the “received text” until the revolutionary nineteenth-century editions of Lachmann and Tischendorf.

Scheide Library (1938)


Both typographically and editorially the Plantin Polyglot, produced under the sponsorship of Philip II of Spain, was the most demanding printed edition of its century. The general editor, Benito Arias, was a Spanish Benedictine learned in oriental languages, whom Philip sent to Antwerp as overseer. Copies were printed on four distinct paper stocks, two of Royal size (as here) and two of Imperial. A fifth, small group of copies was printed on vellum for Philip to distribute as special presentations. The four Old Testament volumes present the text in Hebrew, Latin (Vulgate), Greek (Septuagint), and “Chaldee” (Aramaic: the targum) together with
literal Latin translations of the Greek and Aramaic. The New Testament volume gives the text in Greek, Latin (Vulgate), and Syriac, as well as a literal Latin translation of the Syriac, and the Syriac printed in Hebrew Characters. Three volumes of apparatus were added, including a separate edition of the Old Testament in Hebrew, accompanied by a revision of Santi Pagnini’s Latin translation.

Philip II did not patronize with a liberal hand, and Plantin ended up virtually bankrupt.

Scheide Library (1915)


The first complete Latin Bible printed in England, and a work of considerable complexity: none of the versions represent the Vulgate. The Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew, the Apocrypha from the Greek (by Junius), and the New Testament from the Syriac version. The editors, Isaac Tremellius and Franciscus Junius were respectively a Ferrarese Jew (who converted first to Catholicism, then in short order to Lutheranism and on to Calvinism), and his French son-in-law. During the reign of Edward VI, Tremellius had taught Hebrew at Cambridge University. His son-in-law became father of the great philologist Franciscus Junius (1589-1677), who lived for many years in England and made pioneering studies of Anglo-Saxon, Frisian, and Gothic.

The King James translators relied substantially on the Tremellius-Junius Bible for their interpretation of these several versions.

STC 2056. Scheide Library (1961)

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[Cassiodoro de Reina]. La Biblia, que es, los sacros libros del Viejo y Nuevo Testamento. Trasladada en Español. [Basel: Thomas Guarinus], 1569. 4to.

First complete edition of the Bible in Spanish. Vernacular editions of the Bible were forbidden in Spain from the fifteenth century until well into the nineteenth, as attested by George Borrow’s 1843 The Bible in Spain (“… The journeys, adventures, and imprisonments of an Englishman, in an attempt to circulate the Scriptures in the peninsula”). Cassiodoro de Reina, of Seville, lived for several years in England under Elizabeth, but had to decamp under a charge of heresy; and then in Antwerp and Frankfurt. Reina stayed in contact with English friends, and it is known that he presented copies of his Spanish Bible to Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London, and to Queen Elizabeth. A revision of Reina’s New Testament was printed in London in 1596 by Richard Field, styled on the title as Ricardo del Campo.

Scheide Library (1917)
The London or Walton Polyglot was the first native English work of Biblical scholarship to earn an international reputation. Its editor, Brian Walton, was a London clergyman who in 1641 was deprived of his church under accusation of “subtle tricks and popish innovations.” The following year he was imprisoned for debt; on his release he moved to royalist Oxford, where he formed the plan of this very ambitious polyglot, which added to the many languages of the Paris Polyglot (1629-1645) versions in Persian and Ethiopic. The work was advertised by subscription, and was greeted with enthusiasm, some £8,000 being raised in a few months. Both royalists and republicans put national pride above party in supporting the project. In the first issue, the preface gives thanks to Cromwell for allowing the paper to be imported duty-free. At the restoration of Charles II, a loyal dedication to the king was added, and the preface was reprinted, with the thanks to Cromwell removed.

Yet some mystery remains to be explored. Ten or more copies are now known of the Wicked Bible. However, in the same year, 1631, more than a dozen other octavo editions of the Bible were printed: every one of these is considerably rarer than the banned Wicked one.

The “Wicked” Bible is the most famous curiosity among the innumerable editions of the King James Bible: its compositor set the seventh Commandment as “Thou shalt commit adultery.” It is said that when the mistake was noticed the printers were called before the Star Chamber and fined the large sum of £300, and that the entire edition was recalled and burned. One book trade historian has suggested that a kind of industrial spy intentionally committed the error, to bring into discredit (but unsuccessfully) the Barker family’s Bible patent. The edition was lost from sight until 1855 when the dealer Henry Stevens found a copy and sold it to James Lenox – the copy now at New York Public Library. Lord Macaulay was told of the discovery and refused to credit it, until Lord Stanhope borrowed it and place it under his eyes.

STC 2296. Scheide Library (1920).
HANDLIST OF EXHIBITS: PRINTS, MAPS, DETAILS

No authentic portraits of John Wyclif survive. This fanciful image is from the Latin version of the Nuremburg Chronicle (Nuremberg: Anton Kroberger, 1493), folio 238. The German version published the same year has a different picture of Wyclif.

The Lord’s Prayer in a Wycliffite Bible. Enlarged detail from example below:

…and he seide to hem/ whanne þe preien seie þe/ Fadir halewid be þi name/ þi kyngdom come to. þeue to vs þi dayes breed/ and forþeue to vs oure synnes, as we forþeuen to ech man þat owep to vs/ and lede vs not in to temptacioun/ and he seide to hem/ who of þou shal haue a freend and shal go to him at mydnyþt and shal seie to him/ frend leeue to me þre....

Enlarged detail from Exodus 20 of the so-called ‘Wicked Bible,’ that was published in London in 1631 by Robert Barker.

Enlarged detail from the Coverdale Bible. Here Psalm 23 is labeled as Psalm 22 because Coverdale followed the numbering of the Latin Vulgate text.

Hans Holbein the Younger, German, 1497/98 – 1543

Albrecht Dürer, German, 1471-1528
The Angel Appearing to Joachim.  
1504. Woodcut.  
Graphic Arts Collection. GA 2004.003

Lucas Cranach the Elder,  
German, 1472 - 1553  
Christ and the Woman of Samaria.  
ca. 1500. Woodcut.  
Graphic Arts Collection. GA 2004.001

Hans Wolff Glaser, German, ca. 1560  
The Holy Family.  
1519. Woodcut, after design by Albrecht Dürer, German, 1471-1528.  
Graphic Arts Collection. GA 2004.002

Abraham Ortelius  
Geographia Sacra.  
16--. Engraving.  
First published in his historical atlas Parergon.  
Historic Maps Collection.

The Place of Paradise, the Habitation of Adam and Seth and the Land of Nod. Engraved map based on Thomas Bowen (fl. 1749-1790)  
A Correct Map of the Countries Surrounding the Garden Of Eden, or Paradise, With the Course of Noah’s Ark During the Flood &c. London, 1780.  
Historic Maps Division.

Antoinette von Kahler, Austrian, 1862-1951  
Adam and Eve, Archangels, St. Michael and the Dragon.  
Embroidered silk.  
Princeton, 1942.

BIBLE BOX. Oak with pine top; ornamented front. Dated ca. 1690; once owned by the Barrett family of Concord, Massachusetts.  
In this era, a family usually owned only a very few books, thus chests, boxes, and armoires provided all the space needed. Home use of the open front bookcase came many years later.  
Gift of John H. Scheide, Class of 1896, in 1940.

William Blake, English, 1757-1827  
Illustrations of the Book of Job.  
Graphic Arts Collection.