

Sunday, September 27, 2020—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 120 The Matthew's Bible: Assessing the Scholarship of John Rogers

Introduction

- Last week in Lesson 119 we looked at how the Matthew's Bible became the first Bible to be sanctioned by the English crown as it was “set forth with the King's most gracious license.”
- In addition, we considered the impact that the Crown's “license” had upon the English Bible.
- Today, in Lesson 120 we are going to cover the following points:
 - John Rogers: Editor, Compiler, & Scholar
 - Contents & Features of the Matthew's Bible

John Rogers: Editor, Compiler, & Scholar

- Recall from Lesson 118 that the Matthew's Bible comprises the complete work of William Tyndale (two-thirds of the entire Bible) and that included the following English renderings in print:
 - Genesis—Deuteronomy (Pentateuch)
 - Joshua—II Chronicles (Historical Books)
 - Jonah
 - New Testament
- The remaining section (one-third) was edited material originally provided by Miles Coverdale:
 - Ezra—Esther
 - Job—Song of Solomon
 - Isaiah—Malachi
 - Apocrypha
- When looking at the facts on the whole, it is probably better to view John Rogers as more of an editor and compiler of other people's work than an original translator. Dr. David Daniell, author of *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*, has much to say about the scholarly aspects of Rogers' work.

- “He was careful to keep Tyndale’s text, following the ‘GH’ printing of his 1534 New Testament. Coverdale, in translating the Apocrypha, had omitted the short Prayer of Manasseh, so Rogers supplied his own translation. In the sections wholly taken over from Coverdale, Rogers felt himself free to make many and considerable changes. He used for Job and Isaiah the commentaries of Oecolampadius. For Job, he even translated afresh the opening chapters, which Coverdale had not done well. Hebrew poetry, though often beautiful, is also often difficult to render. Increased knowledge down the centuries changes the readings drastically. John Rogers’ Hebrew restored some coherence to the opening of Job.” (Daniel, 196)
- While Rogers was not the original translator of much of the Biblical text found in the Matthew’s Bible, his volume was innovative in other ways.
 - “Coverdale ignored French sources. Rogers took as a basis for his twenty leaves of preliminary matter the French Bibles of Lefever (1530, 1534; both printed in Antwerp by Martin de Keyer) and Olivetan (1535). From these texts, and from his own knowledge he really expanded the marginal notes in both the Old and New Testament. In reproducing Tyndale’s Pentateuch he omitted three or four of the original marginal comments against the pope, and inserted his own notes from Pellican’s Latin commentary. Tyndale’s historical books lacked marginal notes, so Rogers supplied them from the French Bible, from which source he added to Tyndale’s New Testament notes, so that the whole volume has over two thousand marginal notes, not including cross-references.

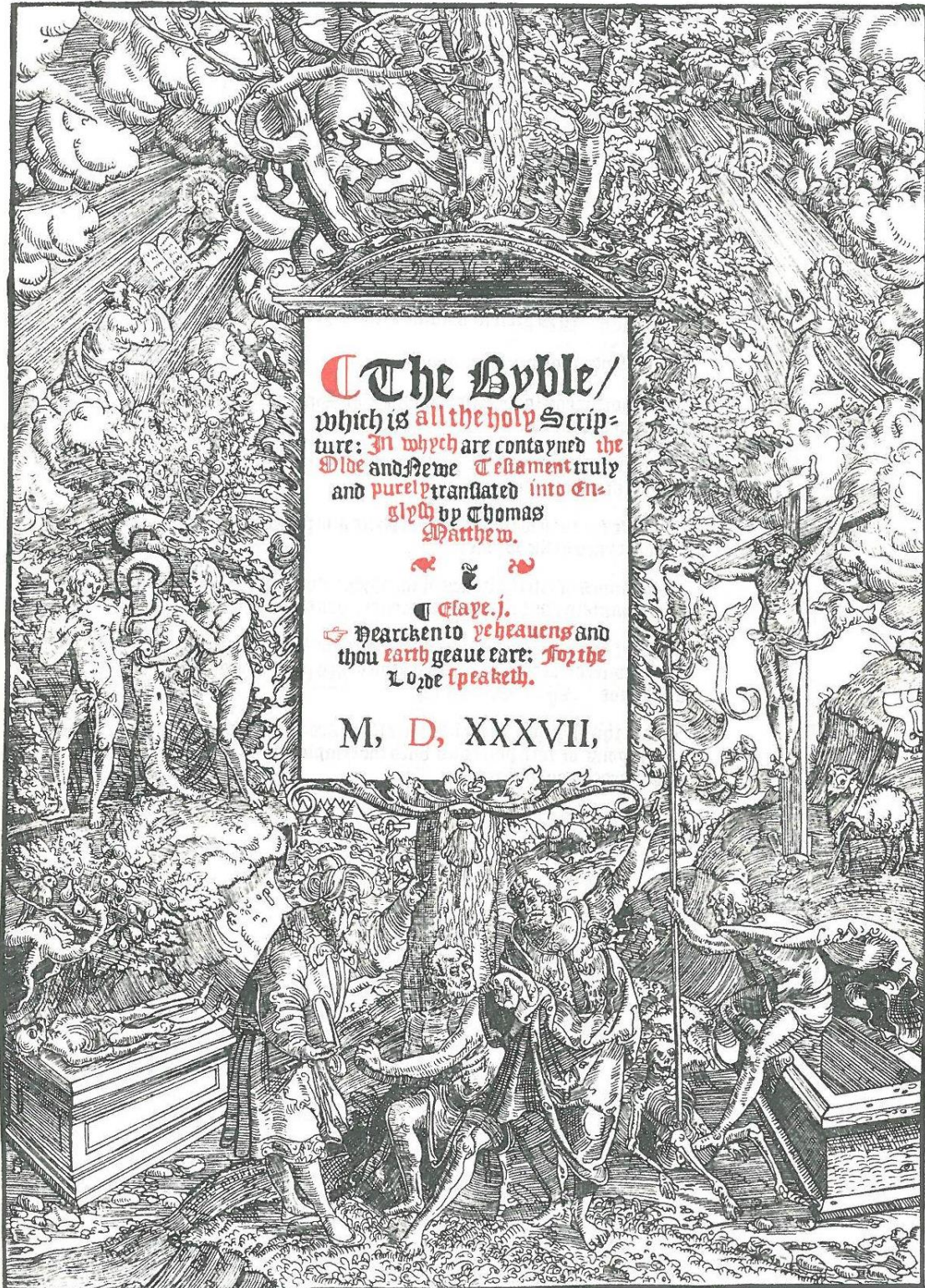
This was pioneer work in Protestant glossing in English. The Latin Bible had been glossed for centuries. . . Tyndale offered King Henry a ‘bare text’, like that of his 1525 Worms New Testament. His Pentateuch has few marginal notes. The first idea of clearing away the scholastic encroachments gave way quickly to recognition that ordinary people needed a great deal of help. Marginal notes—as seen in Tyndale’s own 1534 New Testament—were not for promoting scholastic arguments for readers who were patristic specialists, but for helping the ploughboy. Aristotle did not belong in the margins of Scripture, as Tyndale noted at Deuteronomy 4:2. John Rogers needs more recognition for his contribution to marginal elucidation. Like Tyndale, his scholarship was at the ploughboy’s disposal. He was able to refer the reader to the ‘Chaldee’, the Aramic version of the Old Testament, commonly called the Targum, and to the Greek Septuagint version, to elucidate Hebrew obscurities. He also took from the French versions chapter summaries throughout the whole Bible. Remembered by few now, sometimes only for his reading of the Hebrew ‘hallelujah’ as ‘Praise the Everlasting’, John Rogers, though neglected today, was a modern biblical scholar.” (Daniell, 196-197)

- To these comments made by Dr. Daniell regarding the scholarship of John Rogers, we should add the following sentiments from the pen of Bible collector and historian Donald L. Brake:
 - “The Matthew’s Bible clearly reflects a style of English superior even to Coverdale. Hebrew parallelism is better preserved, its wording is more natural, and its accuracy is apparent. Even, Miles Coverdale, when translating the Great Bible (1539), used Matthew’s as his primary source rather than his own 1535 edition.

Would anyone dare insert notes in a Bible? John Rogers was just the man. He greatly expanded marginal notes that were developed from his own scholarly pursuits and from contemporary continental commentaries. He included comments from Ambrose, Augustine, and Josephus. The Matthew’s Bible notes were expositional in nature, theological in perspective, and practical in orientation. He attempted to explain obscure and difficult passages . . . Unlike Tyndale’s notes, Rogers tended to tone down the inflammatory comments relating to church doctrine. However, it should be concluded that he avoided attacking certain customs and beliefs that would anger the Roman Catholic Church.” (Brake, 126-127)
- J.I. Mombert author of *English Versions of the Bible* adds the following about the scholarship of John Rogers:
 - “It must not be imagined, however, that although the translation of almost the whole of the Matthew’s Bible is the work of Tyndale and Coverdale, the labors of Rogers were light or unnecessary. They were neither and, from beginning to end, the judicial hand of that accomplished scholar is clearly perceptible. The Prayer of Manassas in the Apocrypha has been ascribed to Rogers, although he did not translate it from the Greek (not accessible to him), but from the French Bible of Olivetan (1535), and from the same source likewise is taken the Preface to the Apocrypha, the Table of Principal matters contained in the Bible, and for the most part, the Preface to Solomon’s Song, the division of the Psalter into five treatises, and a number of notes . . .” (Mombert, 181)

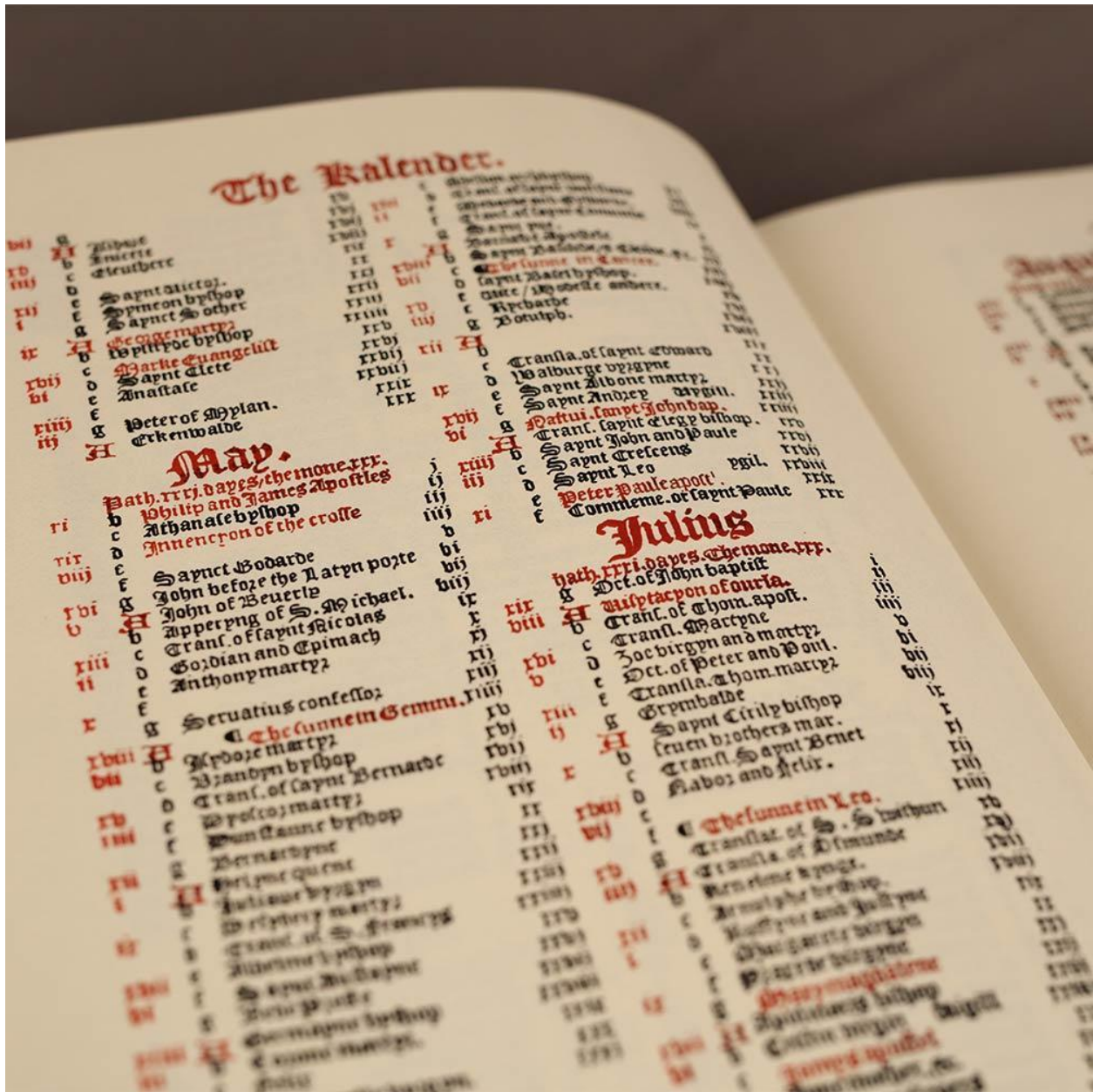
Contents & Features of the Matthew’s Bible

- Given that Matthew’s Bible was the second English Bible ever printed we want to make sure that we spend a bit of time looking at its contents and features.
- The Title Page comprises a “whole-page frontispiece . . . taken from a woodcut used in a Dutch Bible of 1533.” (Daniell, 196) The title in the center of the page reads, “The Bible, which is all the holy Scripture: in which are contained the Old and New Testament truly and purely translated into English by Thomas Matthew.”
- The red text at the bottom of the Title Page announces that this Bible has been “set forth with the kings most gracious license.”



Set forth with the Kinges most gracypous lycēce.

- The next four pages of the Matthew's Bible contain a Calendar & Almanac comprising eighteen years beginning in 1538. At this time, I cannot discern what the significance was in including this information.



- The next page contains an “exhortation to study the scriptures” with John Rogers’ initials at the bottom of the page.

CAn exhortacy onto the studye of the
holy Scripture gathered out of the Bible.

Christ vnto the people, John, v,

Search the Scriptures: for they are they that testifie of me.

Paul to Tymothy, ij, Tymo, iij.

All Scripture geuen by inspiracyō of God, is profitable to teache / to improve / to amende
to instruct in righte wayes / y the mā of God maye be perfect & prepared to al good work.

The same to the Rom. xv.

What thynges soeuer are wyrtten / are wyrtten for our lernyng that we thozou maye
and comforth of the Scripture / myght haue hope.

Salomon Proverb. xxx.

All the worde of God is pure & clene / it is a sylde vnto the that put their trust in it. Put
not hyng vnto hys wordes / lest he reprove the and thou be founde a spar.

Moses to the people, Deu. xij,

Ye shall not do every man what leameth byng good in hys awne eyes: But what soeuer
I commaunde you, that take hede ye do: and put nought therto

The Lorde vnto Josua. Josue. j,

Let not the booke of this lawe departe oute of thy mouth: But reorde therein daye and
nyght / that thou mayest be circumspect to do accordyng to all that is wyrtten therein. For
then shalt thou make thy waye prosperous / and then shalt thou haue vnderstandyng.
Turne therfrom nether to the ryght hande, ner to the left: that thou mayest haue vnder-
standyng in all that thou takest in hande.

The same to the people. Exodi. xij,

And thou shalt thew thy come at that tyme / sayyng: This is done because of that whych
the Lorde pd vnto me when I came out of Egypte. Therefore it shall be a sygne vnto the
vpon thine hande, and a remembrance betwene thine eyes / that the Lorde's lawe maye
be in thy mouth. For with a strong hande the Lorde brought the oute of Egypte.

Moses, Deutero, xxxj.

Set that thou reade this lawe before all Israel in their eares. Gather the people toge-
ther / both men / women / and chyldren and the straungers that are in thy cytyes: that they
maye heare, leme / and feare the Lorde your God to kepe all the wordes of this lawe.

¶.iiij



- Following the exhortation, the reader encounters are two pages outlining “The Sum and Contents of all the Holy Scriptures.”

The summe & content of all the holy Scripture/ both of the olde and newe testament.

- Next, readers of the Matthew’s Bible encounter the three-page epistle dedicatory to King Henry VIII, with whose “most gracious license” the volume was printed.

To the moost noble and gracypous Pryncce Kyng Henry the eyght/ kyng of England and of Fraunce/ Lorde of Ireland &c. Defender of the faythe: and vnder God the chiefe and supreme head of the church of Engeland.

- After the dedication, Rogers included an address to the Christian Reader along with a Table of Principle Matters in the Bible spanning twenty-six pages.

To the Chrysten Readers.

The grace and peace of God be geuen vnto you by Iesus Chyste.

As the bees oyllygently do gather together swete flowers, to make by naturall craft the swete honny, so haue I done the pryncypall sentences conteyned in the Byble. The whych are ordered after the maner of a table, for the consolacion of those whych are not yet exercised & instructed in the holy Scripture. In the which are many harde places, as well of the olde as of the newe Testament expounded/ gathered togetyer / concozded/ and compared one wyth another: to thintent that the prudent Reader (by the spete of God) maye beare awaye pure and cleare vnderstandynge. Wherby euery man (as he is bounde) maye be made ready/ stronge and garnished to answer to all them that aske hym a reason of hys sayth. Thys is also profytable for the particuler and generall exhortacions whych we make to certayne personages/ or comune people: & for to answer truly to Heretiques / & to confounde the aduersaries of the worde of God. In the which also we may fynde (& which helpeth greatly the studie of the readers) the openynge of certayne Hebrewe tropes/ translacions/ synonyms/ and maners of speakynge (whych we call Phrases) conteyned in the Byble. And for the moze easely to fynde the matters desyred (because that by disorder engendzeth confusyon) I haue proceded after the order of an Alphabete: so thintente that none be depzyued of so pzeypous a treasure: the whych ye shall vse to the honoure and glozpe of God/ and to the edyfyinge of hys Church. How be it (good Reader) yf thou fynde not the thynges in thys table expressed/ in the same letters of the Chapters wherin they are assygned: vouchsaue to loke in y letter goynge next befoze or in the letter next folowynge.

**A table of the pryncypall matters conteyned
in the Byble, in whych the readers may fynde and
practyse many comune places.**

- Regarding the contents of the “Table of Principle Matters in the Bible”, J.I. Mombert states the following:
 - “. . . furnished in alphabetical order a vast amount of valuable matter, taken for the most part from Olivetan’s French Bible. The chapters are not broken up into verses, the letters of the alphabet are used to mark annotated passages, and the italics following the chapters in the subjoined examples refer to those passages. [The following image from Mombert provides a sampling of the information contained in the “Table” in the Matthew’s Bible.]

ANGELS. The angels assyste before God, Job xxv. *a*; xxviii. *a*; Dan. vii. *c*; Matth. xviii.; and do minister to men, Ps. civ. *a*; Heb. i. Also they do rebuke sinners, Judg. ii. *a*, and do comfote the afflycte, Gen. xxi. *b*, Lke. xxii. *es*, Dan. vi. *f*. Also they do teach the ignoraunte, example of ye angel which taught Elijah, what he should say to the seruantes of Ohoziah, 4 Reg. i. *a*, also of Daniel, ix. *f*, also of Joseph, Matth. i., ii. *d*, also of Cornelius, Acts x. *a*, also of Zechariah, Luke i. By the angelles God scourgeth his people, 2 Reg. xxiv., 4 Reg. *g*, Acts vii. *d*.

MERYTE. In lokyng euer the Byble, as well the newe as the olde Testament, I haue not founde this word meryte. Meryte then is nothyng; for to meryt is to bind God vnto his creatures, and not to obserue the meryte of Jesus Christ, by which only we are saued; not accordyng to oure workes or merytes, but according to his holy purpose and grace, which was geuen vnto vs before al time. 2 Tim. i. *b*, Tit. iv. *b*: it is then by grace that we are saued through fayth, and not of vs, but by the gyft of God to thyntent that none do boast hym selfe, Eph. ii., Rom. iii. For the tribulacyons of thys world, are not worthy of the glorye that shal be shewed vnto vs, Rom. viii. And if we haue pacyence in them, that cometh of God, 1 Cor. iv. Houe then can we glorye that we do meryte that thyng which is none of ours, in as much as God doth and accomplysheth in vs the good wil, Phil. ii.

RELIGION, for obseruing (not of cloister rules), but of thynges ordayned of God, Exo: xii. *d*, Leue. viii. *g*, Numb. xix. *d*, religion for the sect of the Pharises which were proud Ipocrites and ful of ceremonies, of which S. Paul was at the fyrste, Act. xxvi. *b*. Cornelius being captain of the Italians’ army, is called a religious man, and yet he had made no monastycall voves, Acts x. *a*. The true religion of the Christen standeth not in the dyuersitye of habytes or of voves; but in visityng of the fatherlesse and wydowes in their tribulacyons and kepyng a man’s selfe pure from the wickedness of this world, James i.

(Mombert, 190)

- The front material ends with a one page listing of “the names of the books in the Bible” and “a brief rehearsal of the years passed since the beginning of the world unto the year of our Lord MDXXXVII.”

**[The names of all the
bookes of the Byble / and the content of the Chap-
ters of euery booke: with the nombze of the leaffe
wherin the bookes begynne.**

**A brief rehearsal of the yeares passed since the begynnynge of the worlde / vnto this yeare
of oure Lorde. M. cccc. xxxvii, both after the maner of the reckenyng of the Hebrewes /
and after the reckenyng of Eusebius & other Chronyciers.**

- The text of Matthew’s Bible is divided into the following four parts:
 - Genesis—Solomon’s Ballet (Song of Solomon)
 - The Prophets in English, Esay (Isaiah) to Malachy (Malachi)
 - The Volume of the Books Called Apocrypha
 - The New Testament of our Savior Jesus Christ
- Following the precedent set by Coverdale, Rogers grouped the Apocryphal books together in a separate section between the Testaments with a title page that read:
 - “The volume of the books called Apocrypha: Contained in the common Translation in Latin which are not found in the Hebrew nor in the Chaldee.”
- Underneath this title the names of the Apocryphal books are listed. Please see the image on the next page.



The volume of
 the booke called Apocrypha:
 Contayned in the comen Transl,
 in Latyne, whiche are not
 founde in the Hebrew
 nor in the
 Chalde.

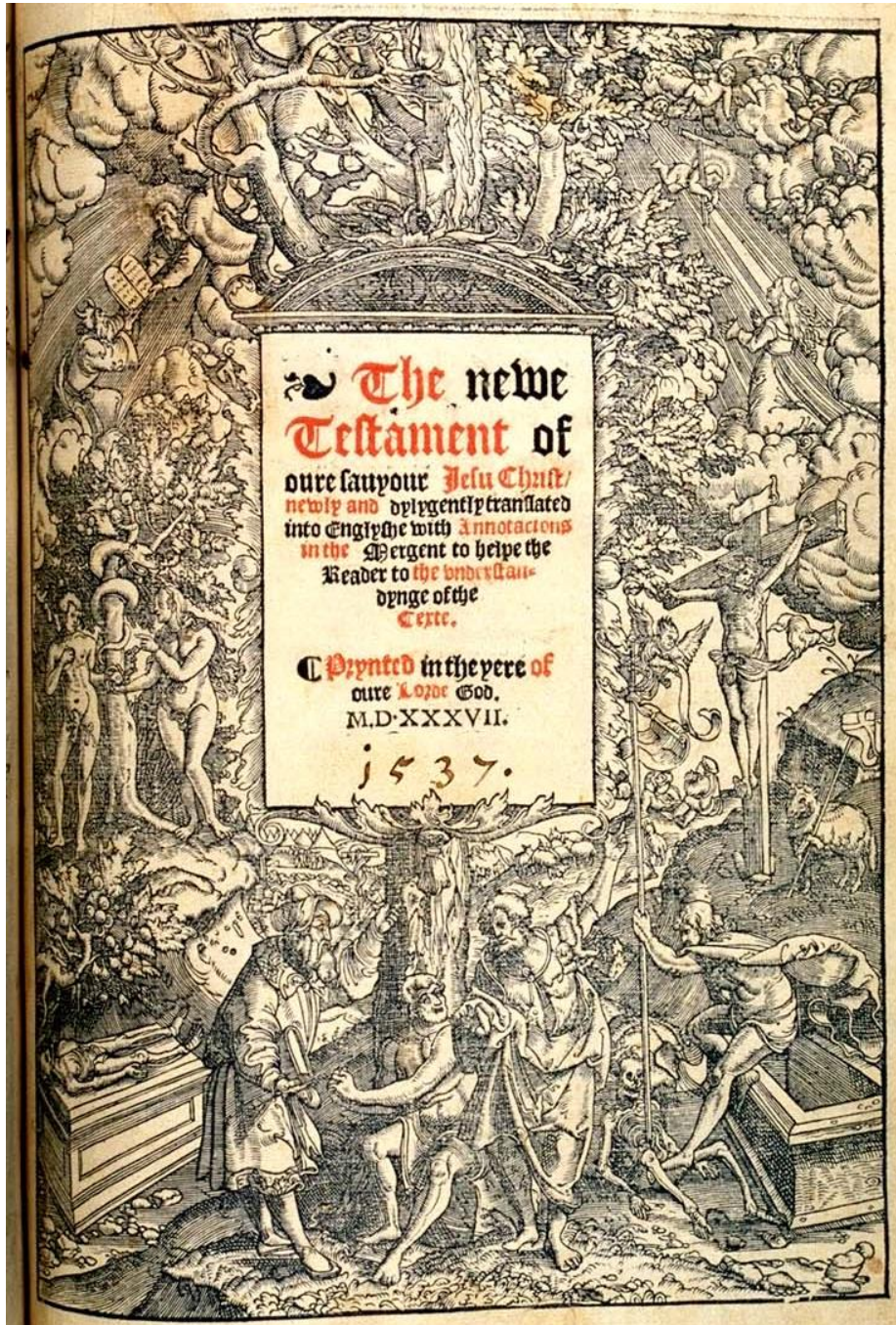


The Regestre therof.

The thirde booke of **Elias**.
 The fourth booke of **Elias**.
 The booke of **Tobit**.
 The booke of **Judith**.
 The rest of the booke of **Heller**.
 The booke of **Wisdom**.
Ecclesiasticus.
Baruch the Prophete.
 The songe of the **iii. Children in the oue**.
 The storye of **Susanna**.
 The storye of **Bel and of the Dragon**.
 The prayer of **Manasse**.
 The fyrst booke of the **Machabees**.
 The second booke of the **Machabees**.



- After the Apocryphal books there is a title page for the beginning of the New Testament before the book of Matthew. The insertion of the title page serves to visually differentiate the contents of the New Testament from the Apocrypha. Rogers stated the following on his title page to the New Testament:
 - “The New Testament of our savior Jesus Christ, newly and diligently translated into English with Annotations in the Margin to help the reader to the understanding of the text.”



- In addition to these features, the Matthew’s Bible also included other artistic touches such as wood cut illustrations and drop caps.
- As noted above, one of the distinguishing features of the Matthew’s Bible is its marginal notes. J.I. Mombert provides the following commentary and examples:
 - “It remains to notice the distinguishing feature of Matthew’s Bible, namely the marginal notes, a few of which . . . are subjoined; some of them have been traced to Pellican and Luther.

Selah. This word after Rabbi Kimchi was a sign or token of lifting up the voice, and also a monition and advertisement to enforce the thought and mind earnestly to give heed to the meaning of the verse unto which it is added. Some will that it signify perpetually or verily.

2 Macc. xii. 44: Judge upon this place whether the opinion hath been to pray for the dead, as to be baptized for them, 1 Cor. xv., which thing was only done to confirm the hope of the resurrection of the dead, not to deliver them from any pain. St. Paul did not allow the ceremony of Christening for the dead, no more doth any place of the canonical scripture allow the ceremony of offering for the dead. Furthermore: This whole book of the Maccabees, and specially this second, is not of sufficient authority to make an article of our faith, as it is before sufficiently proved by the authority of St. Jerome in the prologue of the books called Apocrypha.

St. Matth. i. 18: *Messiah.* It signifieth anointed. Jesus Christ then is the earnest and pledge of God’s promise, by whom the grace and favour of God is promised to us with the Holy Ghost, which illumineth, lighteth, reneweth our hearts to fulfil the law.

St. Matth. vi. 34: It is commanded us in the sweat of our face to win our bread; that travail must we daily, diligently, and earnestly do, but not be careful what profit shall come us thereof, for that were to care for tomorrow. We must therefore commit that to God, which is ready to prosper our labours with His blessing, and that abundantly, so that most shall we profit, when we are least careful.

St. John v. 17: That is, my Father keepeth not the Sabbath day, no more do I. But my Father used no common merchandise on the Sabbath, and no more do I.

St. John vi. 33: The word of the Gospel which is Christ, is the true and lively bread of heaven that giveth life to the whole world.

St. James ii. 24: *Justified*, that is, is declared just, is openly known to be righteous, like as by the fruits the good tree is known for good. Otherwise may not this sentence be interpreted. . . .

(Mombert, 189)

- Lastly, Mombert notes that many of the marginal notes were viewed with distain by Bishops sympathetic to Rome on account of their “strongly anti-papal” content. The following are cited as examples:

Many of the notes are strongly anti-papal. “One of these notes fixeth us in the year of the edition; *viz.*, Mark i. Upon those words, *What new doctrine is this?* the note in the margin is, ‘That that was then *new*, after XV. C. XXXVI. years, is yet *new*. When will it then be old?’ This note was made to meet with the common reproach then given to the religion reformed, that it was a *new* upstart religion, and called *the new learning*. Another marginal note was at Matthew xxv., *And the wise answered, Not so, lest there be not enough*, etc., where the note is, ‘Note here, that their own good works sufficed not for themselves; and therefore remained none to be distributed unto their fellows:’ against works of supererogation, and the merits of saints. And Matthew xvi., *I say unto thee, that thou art Peter: and upon this rock*, etc. The note is, ‘That is, as saith St. Austin, upon the confession which thou hast made, knowledging me to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, I build my congregation or church.’ And again, *I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven*. The note is, ‘Origen, writing upon Matthew, in his first homily affirmeth, *that these words were as well spoken to all the rest of the Apostles as to Peter*. And proves it, in that Christ, John xx., saith, *Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins soever ye remit*, etc., and not *thou remittest*.’ And Matthew xviii., *Whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye loose on earth*, etc. Margin, ‘*Whatsoever ye bind*, etc., is, *Whatsoever ye condemn by my word in earth, the same is condemned in heaven*. And what ye allow by my word in earth, is allowed in heaven.’ These and such like notes and explications, giving offence, no doubt, to the Popish Bishops, when the Bible was printed again (which was in the year 1540) all was left out.” *

(Mombert, 191)

- As noted in Lesson 118, copies of the Matthew’s Bible exist in which the chapter prologues and marginal notes have been scratched out. A.S. Herbert states the following regarding the matter in his *Historical Catalogue of Printed Editions of The English Bible 1525-1961*:
 - “Copies exist, one in BH, in which prologues and notes throughout the volume have been obliterated. This was done to escape penalties that were threatened in 1543 ‘when Parliament proscribed all translations bearing the name of Tyndale, and required that the notes in all other copies should be removed or obliterated.’” (Herbert, 19)

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