

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE EDITION OF THE SCRIPTURES PUBLISHED BY MILES COVERDALE, IN 1535, AND OF A COPY PRESERVED IN THE CATHEDRAL LIBRARY AT GLOUCESTER.¹

ALTHOUGH among early Bibles the Coverdale of 1535 is not one of the rarest, still the inspection of the volume affords a fitting opportunity for a few passing reflections, strictly within the province, and illustrative of the objects of Archæology. No wonder that some obscurity attends the lives and history of the English translators of the Scriptures! As actors in the mightiest revolution which the world had ever witnessed, their entire chance of success rested on the secrecy of their plans, until the fulness of time for letting in the flood of light, which they anticipated from their movement. We remarked this, at the meeting of our Society at Bristol, where a curious copy of Tyndale's Testament was opened to us.² We feel it equally now, when we ask: Who was Coverdale? and where did his English Bible,—his "monumentum ære perennius,"—fresh from the hand of the Master, first see the light? History indeed marks him as the Protestant Bishop of Exeter, by imposition of whose hands, associated with three others, the integrity of our English Hierarchy claims to be maintained:—but looking to an earlier period we are compelled to ask in vain,—“Unde? et quo natus?”—where did he prosecute his studies?—where did he lay the foundation of that world-wide celebrity, which, for all time to come, deservedly attaches to him?

As to the man himself,—Milo, Michael, or Miles Coverdale (for he signed his name indifferently),³ we must be content to know but little; but, as to his great work, the

¹ Read at the Meeting of the Institute at Gloucester, July, 1860.

² Transactions at the Meeting at Bristol in 1851, p. 270.

³ In his letters to Conrad Hubert, he signs himself “Michael Anglus;”—and in one written to Calvin from Frankfort,

1548, still more explicitly—“Michael (alias Milo) Coverdale Anglus.” See Remains of Coverdale, edited for the Parker Society. In the grant of arms made to him by the Heralds' College he is more correctly styled “Milo.”

subject is more inviting; we will first say a few words on the Bible before us, and then a few more on Coverdale's Bible generally. If it were not for a fine copy, in possession of the Countess of Jersey, at Osterley Park, this one at Gloucester, perfect in all its parts, with the title-page of 1536, might be described as of unique character. It is stated to have been presented by Alderman Thomas Pury, who in 1648 had it from Oliver Cromwell. The name of a former possessor, James I. of England, is inferred from its being decorated with the royal arms on the cover. It is dedicated to King Henry VIII., and "his dearest just Wife and most vertuous Princesse Queen Anne"; and at the end of the volume we find this notice:—"Printed in 1535, and finished the fourth day of October,"—i. e., nearly six months at least, as the title shews, before this copy was issued. But we are enabled to shew that the title of 1536 was not the original title of the book, as it came from the press: for the copy in the British Museum, identical with this in every other respect, is dated a year earlier, and purports to have been translated out of "Douche and Latyn,"—which words are wanting in the title of the copy now under consideration.

The opening paragraph of the Dedication suffices to explain to us the motive of this seeming incongruity. It is dedicated, as we have seen, not only to Henry VIII., but to his dearest just wife, Queen Anne. The book was all in type, and not only so, but issued, when the ill-fated queen was in the zenith of her prosperity. Great things were expected from her influence and patronage. But in a few short months, measured from October 4th to the 25th of April ⁴ following, the scene changes;—a frost, a killing frost, intervenes, and the name of Anne Boleyn, so far from being a passport to the capricious monarch's favour, would damage any cause with which it might be connected. What then was to be done to meet the altered circumstances? The Dedication (it is true) might altogether have been cancelled;—but these were the days of dedications, and the whole success of the edition depended on the royal fiat; and the sole motive of the dedication hung on these remarkable words—"I thought it my duty, not only to dedicate this translation unto your Highness, but wholly to commit it unto the same,

⁴ The day on which the Commission for the Queen's trial was tested.

to the intent that it may stand in your grace's hands, to correct it, to amend it, to improve it, yea, and clean to reject it, if your godly wisdom shall think it necessary." Words like these ought never to have been written, but, once deliberately published, they could not be withdrawn.

But the king's third marriage in a very short time suggested a solution of the difficulty. The sunset of Anne's espousals had indeed been dark and dismal, but the morning of Queen Jane's coronation had dawned at least with promise; so the alteration of two letters was deemed sufficient to meet the case. For "Anne" was substituted "Jane;" and the type thus amended is found in existing copies, among which those at Lambeth and at Sion College may be cited as the most accessible.

But did this alteration dispose of every difficulty? Obviously, far from it. A date upon the title page is usually understood to mark the completion of the volume. Here then was a Bible, completed in 1535, but dedicated to a queen, whose new-born royalty dated only from the year following its issue. This contradiction therefore could only be obviated by the printing of a new title-page, in which 35 was changed to 36. And seeing that these changes were all forced upon the publisher after the commencement of the issue, we need not feel surprised that some confusion has arisen among the two titles, the two dedications, and the main body of the work, appended indifferently to each, perchance by the negligence of the binder.

As regards the sequence of publication, the above is the conclusion arrived at, in his "Annals of the English Bible," by the late Christopher Anderson,—an author whose laborious research furnishes the best evidence of a mind imbued with its subject. "Only one other device," he says, "remained to be tried, which was that of a new title, as if it were a different book; changing the year to the next, or 1536, and leaving out the words—"translated out of Douche and Latyn," (p. 563). Correct, however, on the whole, as this writer is, he has manifestly overlooked one circumstance, which obliges us to modify his conclusion. For the fact seems to be, that the dedication to Queen Jane properly belongs to an edition printed by Nycolson of Southwark, as late as 1537. And thus the amendment of the title preceded the change of dedication, instead of its being a sub-

sequent device, as Anderson had erroneously imagined. The only genuine titles now known to exist, whether of '35 or '36, are found in combination with dedications to Anne, which have for their sign a Maltese cross (✠). The dedications to Jane, on the contrary, are signed with a double asterisk (**), and are identical with those of Nycolson, having moreover appended a list of several errata, which clearly point to Nycolson's edition as the one for which they were printed. Thus it is in the copy at Lambeth, and thus also in that in the Althorp Library.

We must not here enter on the merits of Coverdale's version, as compared with that of Tyndale, important and highly interesting as that question is ;—but, looking merely at his typography, we observe that his Dedication and Prologue are printed in Church Text, whereas the Bible itself is in a foreign type, of more angular character. To account for this difference, a belief was long prevalent that the Dedication and Prologue were supplied in this kingdom, after the safe arrival of the rest of the volume. But, a few years ago, the discovery of a fine Coverdale, in the Holkham Library, has made us acquainted with the fact, that the Prologue in the first instance was printed in foreign Gothic, uniformly with the chapters. A few of its concluding paragraphs are all that time has spared to us; and these perhaps owe their preservation to the circumstance of their occupying the back of a table of the contents of Genesis; just as the verso of the first title (1535) is filled with another Table of the “Bokes” of the Old Testament, also in the foreign Gothic. What was the precise reason for replacing so much matter as the Dedication and Prologue cannot now be conjectured on the evidence of a mere fragment; but the fact of the reprint, for some cause or other, may be taken as undeniable. We give, at the conclusion of this notice, a facsimile of the concluding lines of the Prologue—first, as they appear in the Holkham copy; secondly, as they appear in all subsequent issues.

Our glance at these Bibles may profitably be extended to illustrate two malpractices, which we cannot too strongly reprobate, whether of restoration or destruction. Take, for example, the Coverdale in Sion College Library. We find that in 1772 it was borrowed by the British Museum, in order to supply mutually existing defects in each. Accord-

ingly it came back, with the woodcuts of its title page supplied by "an ingenious penman," the style and execution of which we will not severely criticise, seeing them to be the performance of probably a clever schoolboy. But the ground of our objection is, that the title thus inserted is the title of 1535, which we hold to be improperly prefixed to a Dedication inscribed to Queen Jane, as it involves nothing less than a manifest anachronism.

And, speaking as archæologists, we cannot too strongly deprecate that sort of restoration to which Coverdale has been subjected. Nine-tenths of the Coverdales, which the wreck of time has spared, come down to us without titles. Their possessors, in many instances, have wished to do them honour, after their own fashion, by making good the deficiency; but the power, rather than the will, was wanting. Till the discovery of the Holkham Bible, no perfect title of 1535 was accessible. The British Museum copy had lost all the woodcuts of its outer side completely; but, as a similar pattern had been used in Matthew's Bible of 1539, it was thought that a skilful amalgamation would well serve the purpose. However, after all, it was but the junction of the "*humanum caput*" and the "*cervix equinus*;" for Matthew had adopted Latin texts to illustrate his woodcuts, but Coverdale's were all in English. To make the matter worse, a late eminent bookseller prepared at some expense a woodblock to perpetuate the pretended facsimile, which has thus found its way into many libraries. Thus much for restoration injudiciously carried out.

And if we would see destruction, we have only to examine the copy preserved in the British Museum. There we shall see "specimens of the initial and capital letters used in the work cut from another copy, and pasted on a separate leaf!" Truly in those days, Coverdales must have been "well cheap," and easy of access;—but living in the present century, we regret the reckless destruction of a valuable and interesting book.

A question has been raised, in regard to the probable press at which this Bible was printed. And as many cities contended for the birth of Homer, so for the printing press of Coverdale many places have been claimants; Zurich, Frankfurt, Cologne, Lubec, and even Paris, without much probability of adjusting their several pretensions. In offering, upon this head, some concluding observations, I venture only

to suggest a few reflections which have arisen in my own mind, as between the adverse claims of Germany and France. In the first place, it may well be asked, why should Coverdale have deserted those presses of Germany, in which Bible printing had so long prospered? This would have been to incur a serious risk, not only without sufficient motive, but in the face of much obvious discouragement; for the fires of our Smithfield, which raged so furiously afterwards, were but the reflection of those which were now being kindled in the Place de Grève; and Francis, when he burned his holocaust of the preceding year, acted only in obedience to a higher moving power, for in that dreadful extremity the king was not alone. Accompanied by cardinals and bishops, in the midst of torches and banners and relics of the saints,—“the whole machinery of the Papacy,”—he burned six heretics at a single fire. And, although the scepticism of Rabelais, this very year, passed the Inquisitor of the Sorbonne without even a challenge, we may be sure that the Apostle Paul, and the four Evangelists, would have found the king's edict against printing too strong a barrier to be passed without a miracle.

I am aware that three years afterwards we have English Bibles and Testaments undoubtedly Parisian, but these appeared only “*cum gratiâ et privilegio Regis*.” One, more especially, was the fruit of a direct communication between Henry and Francis, which resulted in permission given to Grafton and Coverdale to superintend the work. But even here the Inquisition had well nigh superseded the royal mandate. Many of these Bibles were burned publicly in open daylight. The rest of this fine edition merely owed their preservation to the provident zeal and activity which completed them in England.

Little can be inferred from an examination of the paper on which this Bible is printed. The paper-mark of the bull's head and serpent, which, singularly enough is found to occur only once, and that on the same page, the last folio of the Pentateuch, in a majority of copies, proves very little; because, though it originated in Germany, it became a universal mark in the sixteenth century.

It is time, however, that these remarks were brought to a conclusion; and we do so with a vain regret, that the fate of Coverdale, while living, did but prefigure the destiny

which awaited his bones when dead. "Indignum passus sæpius exilium!" a line inscribed upon his monument after the fire of London, is descriptive of his hard lot, whether in life or death. Surely, when exhumed from his resting-place in 1840, by the excavator who dug the foundations of the Royal Exchange of London, St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey ought at least to have received him. But no! an obscure parish performs the duty of the nation; and a humble inscription records that the parishioners of St. Magnus, desirous of acknowledging the mercy of God, and calling to mind that Miles Coverdale was once rector of their parish, erected a monument to his memory. "How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."—Is. lii. 7.

JAMES LEE WARNER.

scrypture maye haue fre passage, and be had in
reputacion, to the worshippe of the authoꝝ
therof, which is enen God himselfe: to
whom for his most blessed wor-
de, be glory and domynio
now and euer.
Amen.

Facsimile of the concluding lines of the Prologue in the copy of Coverdale's Bible in the Holkham Library.

the holy scrypture maye haue fre passage, and be had in re-
putacion, to the worshippe of the authoꝝ therof,
which is enen God himselfe: to whom
for his most blessed worde be
glory & domynion
now & euer.
Amen.

Facsimile of the concluding lines of Prologue in ordinary copies of Coverdale's Bible.

The following tabular view of the condition of existing copies of Coverdale's Bible, 1535, will be found illustrative of the foregoing memoir. Of those which have come under the author's observation, those marked **B.** have the bull's head watermark on the last leaf of the Pentateuch.

IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

Where existing.	Title leaf.	Preliminary matter and first genuine Signature.
British Museum. Dr. Coombe's Copy. . .	1535.— $\frac{1}{3}$ fac- simile by Harris. Table of Bokes of O. T. on verso . .	perfect. Sign ✠ ii. Dedication to Anne.
Do., Grenville Library	wanting. . .	wants 3 first leaves, which are supplied in facsimile by Harris. Sign ✠ 6.
Baptist College, Bristol	facs. by Harris	wants Dedication and Prologue, which are supplied in facsimile by Harris.
Cambridge University Library B.	facsimile by Pickering .	wants 2 first leaves. Sign ✠ iii.
Do., King's College . .	wanting. . .	perfect. Sign ✠ ii. Dedication to Anne.
Do., St. John's College	wanting. . .	wanting.
Do., Emmanuel Col- lege. B.	wanting. . .	perfect. Sign ✠ ii. Dedication to Anne.
Do., Pembroke Coll. B.	wanting. . .	wanting.
Durham Cathedral . .	wanting. . .	wants all but last page of Prologue, which has no list of errata.
Dublin University . .	facsimile . .	wants 3 first leaves, which are sup- plied by facsimiles. Sign ✠ 6.
Do.,	wanting. . .	wanting.
Glasgow University, B.	facsimile . .	wants 2 first leaves, which are sup- plied by facsimiles. Sign ✠ iii.
Gloucester Cathedral .	1536.—Original, perfect. no matter on verso . .	perfect. Sign ✠ ii. Dedication to Anne.
Lambeth Palace . B.	wanting. . .	from Nycolson, 1537. Sign **ii. Dedi- cation to Jane, with list of Nycolson's errata on last page of Prologue.
Do., B.	wanting. . .	perfect. Sign ✠ ii. Dedication to Anne.
Oxford, Bodleian . . .	facsimile by Harris . .	perfect. Sign ✠ ii. Dedication to Anne.
Do., All Soul's College .	wanting. . .	wants 3 first leaves. Sign ✠ 6.
Rochester Cathedral, B.	wanting. . .	perfect. Dedication to Anne, altered by pen to Jane.
Sion College . . B.	facsimile . .	first 4 leaves from Nycolson, 1537. Sign **ii. Last page of the Prologue original, therefore without the list of Nycolson's errata.

124 COPIES OF COVERDALE'S BIBLE IN PRIVATE LIBRARIES.

- Earl of Leicester, **B.** Holkham Hall, Norfolk. The only perfect title of 1535, and the last leaf of the Prologue in foreign type.
- Countess of Jersey, Osterley Park, Middlesex. Title of 1536.
- Earl Spencer, **B.** Title from Hyll and Reynaldes. Dedication from Nycolson's Ed.
- Earl of Ashburnham. A valuable copy, formerly in Lea Wilson's collection.
- George Offor, Esq., Grove House, Hackney. A remarkable copy, with some leaves uncut.
- William Tite, Esq., M.P., F.R.S. A valuable copy, formerly in the possession of Dr. Daly. **B.**
- Francis Fry, Esq.; to whom the Author of this List is indebted for valuable assistance. **B.**
- Mr. Lilly, Bedford Street, Covent Garden, London, has two copies, one of which, unlike all others, has the bull's head papermark, not on the last leaf, but on fol. lxxxvi.
- Marquis of Northampton, Castle Ashby, Northamptonshire.
- Lord Lindsay.
- Lord Sondes, Elmham Hall, Norfolk. **B.**
- Thomas Bateman, Esq., Lomberdale House, Youlgrave, Derbyshire.
- Beriah Botfield, Esq., M.P., Norton Hall, Daventry, Northamptonshire.
- William Euing, Esq., Glasgow.
- Henry Huth, Esq., Sussex Place, Regent's Park.
- Rev. Samuel Lysons, Hempsted Court, Gloucester.
- William Fuller Maitland, Esq., Storstead House, Bishop's Stortford.
- Algernon Perkins, Esq., Hanworth Park.
- John Thomas Symes, Esq., Brighton.
- Matthew Wilson Esq., Eshton Hall, Yorkshire.
- Col. Wildman, formerly at Newstead Abbey.
- Mr. Lenox, of New York, U.S.; formerly the Rev. Dr. Hawtrey's copy.