CELEBRATING THE GENEVAN BIBLE

RICHARD C. OUDERSLUYS

This year marks the four hundredth anniversary of the Genevan New Testament, and 1960 will mark a similar anniversary for the Genevan Bible. It will be passing strange and most regrettable if these quadricentennial anniversary years 1957-60 do not inaugurate a series of studies which will record for our day something of the historical and literary significance of this great edition of the English Bible.

The inclusion in our Seminary library Bible Collection of a previously unreported and undescribed copy of the Genevan Bible provides both an occasion and a topic for the notes which follow and for beginning now the observance of this anniversary in our own Reformed Church circles.

I

The place of the Genevan Bible in the history of English Protestantism is well known. It was the popular Bible of the English people from 1560 till well on in the 17th century, and its heavy publication and wide perusal contributed effectively to the spread of the Reformation doctrines. Its popularity may be conveniently measured by the number of its editions compared with those of other great Bibles published after 1560. Tyndale's New Testament went through 5 editions; the Great Bible, 7 magnificent folio editions; the Bishops' Bible, 22 editions; the New Testament of the Bishops' Bible, 14 editions; or a total of 48 editions for these Bibles. On the other hand, the Genevan Bible and New Testament went through approximately 180 editions. Its literary influence upon subsequent versions of the English Bible has been acknowledged on every hand. All but one of the 122 texts of Cromwell's Soldiers' Pocket Bible (1643) were taken from the Genevan Bible. Its influence upon the translators of the King James Version (1611) is well known, and through this latter “authorized” version the phrasing and vocabulary of the unauthorized Genevan Bible continued through the centuries.  

1H. R. Willoughby, Soldiers' Bibles Through Three Centuries, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944). In addition to a definitive treatment of war bibles, this work contains a beautiful facsimile of Cromwell's Soldier's Bible.
3While there are three early Bibles known as "authorized" Bibles, the Great Bible (1539-41), the Bishops' Bible (1568), and the King James Bible (1611), strangely enough, there is on record no official action or sanction for the latter, although it has come to be regarded as the authorized Bible.
The persecutions of Mary Tudor who came to the throne in 1553 set the stage for the eventual publication of this popular Protestant Bible. While some three hundred reformers suffered martyrdom, notably Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer, others like Coverdale and Whittingham fled to Geneva. There with the help of Calvin and Beza, they employed themselves in producing a new revision of the Bible. The New Testament appeared in 1557 with an introduction by Calvin, but the work is usually credited to Calvin's brother-in-law, William Whittingham. It was based on Tyndale's 1534 edition with revisions drawn mainly from Beza's Latin text and commentary of 1556. Beza, it will be recalled, settled in Geneva in 1558 and became president of Calvin's college and succeeded Calvin as head of the Genevan church in 1564. Since the English reformers had no printing establishment of their own, the book was printed in Geneva by Conrad Badius, a convert and friend of Calvin. It was immediately popular and for good reasons. It was printed in clear Roman type and in convenient duodecimo size, and for the first time in English, the verses were divided and numbered consecutively. This versification was probably that of Robert Estienne's 1551 edition of the Greek Testament via Beza's Latin text of 1556. The New Testament was followed shortly by the publication of the whole Bible in 1560. The work subsequently became known as the Breeches Bible because of its rendering of Genesis 3:7: "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves breeches." Other features of this Bible, however, are equally interesting although not as well known, as for example, the use of the word "cratch" for "manger" in the infancy narrative of Luke (2:7,12,16). While the product of the combined efforts of several scholars, the book was in the main the work of William Whittingham, Anthony Gilby, and Thomas Sampson. The cost of the publication was borne by the congregation at Geneva, and among the prominent contributors was John Bodley, who afterward received from Queen Elizabeth the sole patent to print the work, although seemingly he never made use of the privilege. Many improvements in the Genevan New Testament of 1557 were made when it was incorporated in the complete Bible of 1560. The Old Testament was based on an extensive and independent revision of the Great Bible (1539) by the aid of the Hebrew text, the Latin versions of Pagninus (1528), Münster (1534-35), Juda (1543), and the French version of Olivetan. Dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, the preface of the Bible is dated April 10, 1560, more than a year after Elizabeth's Coronation. The Preface outlined in detail the aims and methods of the translators, and summarized beautifully the Protestant view of the practical importance of the Bible. The following description is characteristic of the Genevan appreciation of the Word of God:

(24)
"It is the light to our paths, the keye of the kingdome of heauen, our comfort in affliction, our shielfe and sworde against Satan, the schoole of all wisdome, the glasse wherein we beholde God's face, the testimonie of his fauor, and the only foode and nourishment of our soules."

The title-page carries the following information:

"The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament. Translated according to the Ebrue and Greke, and conferred with the best translations vpon all the hard places, and other things of great importance as may appear in the Epistle to the Reader. At Geneva. Printed by Rouland Hall. M.D.L.X."

It was issued in the convenient quarto size, which made it a handy book for daily use. Most of the previous English Bibles had been in the large and heavy folio size. It was the most accurate and scholarly English Bible produced before the King James Bible. The Old Testament in particular was a high accomplishment in faithful translation. The Hebrew scholarship of the translators was of high calibre, and there is strong evidence that they were the first of the English translators to make considerable use of the Hebrew commentaries of David Kimchi.4

Perhaps the most popular feature of the work for Protestants generally was its system of extensive marginal annotation, together with numerous additional "helps" such as maps, tables, running titles, chapter summaries, and after 1579, a Calvinistic catechism. The strong Calvinistic and Puritan bias of the work did not make it popular with the more moderately inclined royalty and clergy, and its use in the churches of England was forbidden. Archbishop Parker was especially dissatisfied with the book and succeeded in getting the Queen to order the official use of the Great Bible in order to challenge the obvious popularity of the Genevan Bible. Parker also set in motion the production of a new work, and in 1568 the volume known as the Bishops' Bible was ready for publication.

A major development in the history of the Genevan Bible took place in 1576 when Lawrence Tomson brought out his edition of the New Testament.5 The text varied somewhat from that of the Genevan Bible, and the notes were taken mainly from Beza's Greek and Latin New Testament. In 1587 a quarto edition of the Genevan Bible was issued in which Tomson's New Testament text and notes were substituted. Some preferred the 1560 version, and as a result two series of Genevan Bibles came into circulation, the one with the New Testament of the 1560

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5"Lawrence Tomson (1539-1608) was a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and a distinguished scholar who used twelve languages, and wrote several theological works, the principal one being his New Testament. He was employed by Sir Francis Walsingham." See Charles Eason, *The Genevan Bible: Notes on its Production and Distribution*, (Dublin: Eason & Son, 1937), p. 5.
Bible, the other with Tomson's New Testament. Tomson's edition underwent one more significant change. At the end of his New Testament in the Bibles of 1595, 1598 and 1601, he inserted the Notes on Revelation by Franciscus Junius. In a 1590 edition of the Latin Bible, Junius had added copious notes on the book of Revelation. According to Charles Eason, these notes were translated by Tomson and printed separately in a little brochure of twenty-two pages. These notes were violently anti-papal and did much to foster the resistance of the English reformers against all compromise with the Roman church. A few citations will illustrate their anti-papal character. At Revelation 9:5 we read, "And to them was commanded that they should not kill them, but that they should be vexed five moneths, and that their paine should be as the paine that commeth of a scorpion, when he hath stung a man." The marginal notation reads in part:

Now this space is to bee accounted from the end of that thousand yeares mentioned, Chap. 20:3 and that is from the Popedome of that Gregory the seuenth, a most monstrous Necromancer, who before was called Hildebrandus Senesis: for this man being made altogether of impiety and wickednesse, as a slave of the devil, whom he served, was the most wicked firebrand of the world: he excommunicated the Emperor Henry the fourth; went about by all manner of trecherie to set vp and put downe empires and kingdoms as he liked himselfe: and doubted not to set Rodolph the Swedon ouer the Empire in stead of Henry before named, sending vnto him a Crowne with this verse annexed vnto it, *Petra dedit Petre, Petrus diadem Rodolpho*: that is, The Rocke to Peter gaue the crowne, and Peter Rodolph doth renowne. Finally, he so finely bestirred himselfe in his affaires, as he miserably set all Christendome on fire, and conueyed ouer vnto his successors the burning brand of the same: who enraged with like ambition, never ceased to nourish that flame, and to enkindle it more and more: whereby Cities, Common-eweales, and whole kingdoms set together by the eares amongst themselves by most expert cutthroats, came to ruine, whiles they miserably wounded one another. This terme of an hundred and fiftie years, taketh end in the time of Gregory the ninth, or *Hugelinus Anagniensis* (as he was before called) who caused to be compiled by one Raimond his chaplaine and confessour, the body of Decretals, and by sufferance of the Kings and Princes to be published in the Christian world, and established for a law. For by this sleight at length the Popes arrogated vnto themselves license to kill whomse they would, while others were unawares: and without feare established a butchery out of many of the wicked Canons of the Decretals, which the trumpet of the fift Angel had expressly forbidden, and had hindered vntill this time.

At Revelation 17:3, 4 we read in part: "I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast . . . and the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet." The marginal annotation for these verses runs as follows:

A scarlet colour, that is, with red and purple garment: and surely it was not

*Ibid*, p. 27. These Notes must be distinguished from the larger Commentary on Revelation in Latin by Junius which was translated into English in 1594, a book of 286 pages.
without cause that the Romish clergie were so much delighted with this colour. That harlot, the spiritual Babylon, which is Rome. She is described by her attire, profession and deeds.

The mention of the "three days" in Revelation 11:11 is annotated thus: "That is, what time God shall destroy that wicked Boniface." The "second beast" mentioned in Revelation 13:11 receives this marginal explanation:

The second member of the vision, concerning the ecclesiasticall dominion, which in Rome succeeded that which was politicke, and is the power of the corporation of false Prophets, and of the forgers of false doctrine.

Anti-papal utterances of this character are not limited to Junius' Notes on Revelation. The Tomson New Testament in general was much more controversial in its marginal comments than either the Genevan New Testament or the Genevan Bible of 1560. This was due to the fact that Tomson's guiding spirit was Beza rather than Calvin. An example of the Tomson type of polemic may be found at I Timothy 4:12 where the biblical text reads: "Let no man despise thy youth, but be vnto them that beleue, an ensample in worde, in conuersation, in loue, in spirit, in faith, and in purenesse." The margin then provides this helpful comment:

Now hee returneth to that exhortation, shewing which are the vertues of a Pastour, whereby hee may come to be reverenced, although hee be but young, to wit, such speech and life as are witnesses of charitie, zeale, faith and puri­tie, but here is no mention made of the crosier staffe, ring, cloake, and such other foolish and childish toys.

Another example may be found in I Timothy 6:4 where the phrase "strife of wordes" receives this pithy comment:

Striuings about words, not about matter: and by words he meaneth all those things which have no pith in them, whereby we can reape no proffite. Such as we see in those shamelesse schooles of Poperie, which are nothing else but vaine babbling and prating.

A reference should also be made, if only in passing, to a peculiarity of Tomson's translating technique. In his eagerness to do justice to the force of the Greek definite article, he constantly rendered it by "that" or "this" and in many instances this practice led to some rather ludicrous results, as for example at 1 John 5:12 which reads: "He that hath that Son hath that life: and he that hath not that Son of God hath not that life." This was in imitation of Beza's translating procedure.7

The Tomson New Testament together with Junius' Notes form an important chapter in the history of the Genevan Bible because they were a regular feature of numerous editions printed in Amsterdam up to 1644.

These editions were imported into England with a title page bearing the date 1599, although printed much later. In many of these editions the Apocrypha was omitted in accordance with the decision of the Synod of Dordt in 1618. According to Charles Eason, there were at least twelve of these misdated editions, all bearing the 1599 date and containing the Tomson New Testament and the Notes of Junius.\(^8\)

### II

The copy of the Genevan Bible in our Seminary Library Collection belongs to the second series described above, a misdated edition containing the Tomson New Testament and the Notes of Junius. It is substantially bound in leather with a simple hand-tooled design on the covers. The first of the initial pages is a full page title-woodcut. Structurally it is of the border variety composed of twenty-four square blocks: twelve bearing symbols of the twelve tribes of Israel and twelve bearing conventional representations of the twelve apostles. This border is decorative rather than pictorial, and surrounds an inner panel of letterpress. At the corners of the inner panel are four medallions of the four evangelists. The upper medallions of Matthew and Mark are separated by two simple representations of the dove and the burning lamp. The two lower medallions of Luke and John are separated by a small Agnus Dei with a bannered Cross. The letterpress reproduces the main content of the title-page which follows.

On the lower half of the title-page is a small woodblock representing the Crossing of the Red Sea. Above it is the text of Exodus 14:13 and below it the text of Exodus 14:14, and on the verticals run the lines of Psalm 34:19. The title-page gives the following information:

The Bible, that is, the Holy Scriptures contained in the Olde and Newe Testament, translated according to the Ebrewe and Greeke, and conferred with the best translations in divers languages. With most profitable Annotations upon all the hard places, and other things of great importance. Imprinted at London by the Deputies of Christopher Barker, Printer to the Queens most excellent Maiestie. 1599. Cum privilegio.

In the sequence of the initial pages there appears next the Preface which is entitled "To the Christian Reader." By using small 7-point type the Preface was successfully compressed to a single page, but such compressed, small type could hardly have encouraged the reading of the document.\(^9\) On the back of the Preface is a rhymed tribute to the

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\(^8\)Op. cit., p. 5. "These misdated editions—over 12 or more—were closely compared by Lea Wilson in the Catalogue of the Bibles in his collection, and his conclusions are accepted by the Editors of the British & Foreign Bible Society's Historical Catalogue."

Scripture entitled "Of the incomparable treasure of the Holy Scriptures, with a prayer for the true use of the same." The verso of this page carries the Table of Contents in three divisions. "The bookes called Apocripha" are listed here but form no part of the biblical text.

The book reveals many of the regular features found in all editions of the Genevan Bible such as decorative initials at the beginning of each book, the heavy initial at the beginning of every chapter of every book, numerous maps and woodcuts which illustrate the accompanying text, the extensive "Argument" or summary of content which is prefixed to each book, and the usual Calvinistic annotations.

The New Testament section presents two initial pages, the first of which reproduces the woodcut used at the head of the Bible. Since no separate title-page is allotted to this edition, the reader must have recourse to the center panel of the woodcut for his title-page information which is as follows:


The additional initial page furnishes on the recto the prefatory address "The Printer to the diligent Reader," and on the verso a large map of Palestine entitled:

The description of the holy Land containinge the places mentione in the foure Evangelists, with other places about the sea coasts, wherein may be seene the wayes and iourneyes of Christ and his Apostles to Iudea, Samaria, and Galile: for into these parts this land is divided.

Below the map is a list of 32 places with guides for their identification and location. The list carries this heading:

The places specified in the Mappe, with their situation by observation of the degrees concerning their length and breadth.

As a preface to Junius' Notes on Revelation there is printed on the back of the Epistle of Jude the familiar chronological table of events used by the author in his interpretation. It is entitled "The Order of Time wherevnto the Contents of this booke are to be referred." Typical of the remarks in this Table is that for the year of Christ 1217, which reads as follows:

The Dragon vexeth the world 150 yecres vnto Gregory the ix, who writ the Decretals and most cruelly persecuted the Emperour Frederick the second. The dragon by both the beasts persecuteth the Church, and putteth the godly to death, chap. 9.

Following the Book of Revelation are found in regular order the two Tables customary in Genevan Bibles. The first contains the "Inter-
interpretation of the proper names” and the second, a concordance. The final distinguishing feature of this edition is “The CL Psalms of David in Scots Meter, after the forme that they are used to bee sung in the Kirke of Scotland.” On the decorative page standing at the head of this rhymed psalter is this publishing notice: “Edinburgh, Printed by the Heires of Andro Hart, Anno Dom. 1632.” Following the psalter collection is a Table of the Psalms according to their beginning lines. The final page carries “A Forme of Prayers to be vsed in priuate Houses,” and three rather lengthy prayers are printed in the small 7-point type.

The inclusion of the 1632 Psalter published by the “heires of Andro Hart” poses something of a problem in establishing the publishing locale of our Bible. We know that Hart printed Genevan Bibles with the Tomson New Testament in Edinburgh (folio, 1610), and also had them printed at Dordt (1601). His partners and successors also continued other and subsequent editions. It seems unlikely, however, that our copy represents one of these Hart editions. Our copy bears striking similarities to the No. 7 Bible in the collection of Mr. Francis Frye, which in turn is identical with that issued by F. Stam for Thomas Crawford at Amsterdam in 1633, with the exception of the two titles to the Old and New Testaments. A number of considerations bear out the judgment that our Bible was one of those published at Amsterdam in 1633 or a few years later. For one thing, folio 84 in the book of Joshua contains the familiar map of Palestine with a number of Dutch misspellings, among which is “the Mediterane Zed’ for “Mediterranean Sea.” In fact, folio 84 is full of misprints of names. The constant confusion of the letters (d), (t), and (th), also points to a Dutch origin. The spellings of host, abode, dance, and move are essentially Dutch. Whereas in English editions these words are mostly without a diphthong, in the Dutch editions they are almost invariably spelled as hoaste, aboade, daunce, and moove. The printing of the italic word was as vvas in Joshua 14:15 is another tell-tale sign of the Dutch origin of our Bible. This characteristic of the Dutch editions was apparently due to the absence of the letter w from their italic alphabet.

These editions also generally contained the psalter for purposes of congregational singing, and were evidently printed to match the edition they are bound up with. While these Dutch editions were intended for the use of English Puritans of the Low Countries, many of them found their way into England, and notably, Scotland. It would appear then, that our copy of the Genevan Bible can hardly be earlier than 1633.

One consideration yet to be mentioned may affect our estimate of the history of our copy. Careful examination shows that the upper margins

have been severely trimmed at some time or other. In fact, they are so severely trimmed that the running headings and chapter numbers are almost excised and not a few are badly mutilated. This may indicate that the psalter section was added later to one of the Dutch editions, the whole being retrimmed and rebound. Until further judgment is obtained, we shall venture the tentative judgment that our Genevan Bible is probably thirty to forty years later than its indicated date, that it was published in Amsterdam, and that it had a Scottish circulation and use.