



UNTOLD TALES OF FALMOUTH

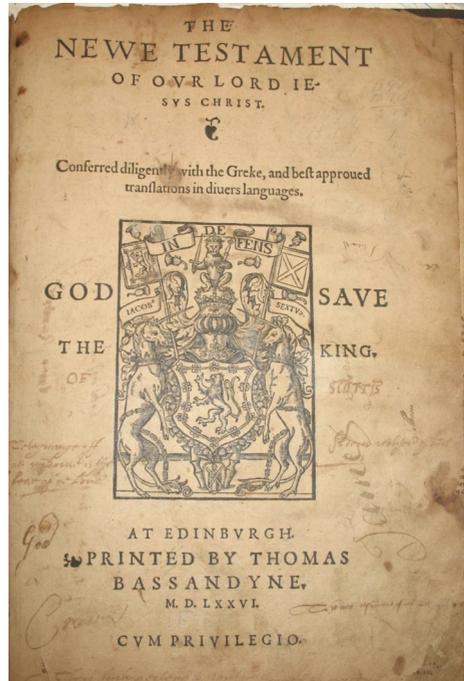
from the archives of Museums on the Green

The Pilgrims' Favorite Bible

During a recent review of Bibles in the archives, the Hall-Rand family Bible caught our attention—not so much for its genealogical data, but for the age of the book itself. Though its title page, and thus a publication date, were missing, the New Testament title page offered a date of 1576, with the name of Thomas Bassandyne as printer and Edinburgh, Scotland as place of publication.

Further research revealed that the “Bassandyne Bible,” published by the team of Thomas Bassandyne and Alexander Arbuthnot in 1579, has an honored place in the lineage of English language Bibles. For his edition, Bassandyne used the text of the Geneva Bible published in 1560. This translation was made by English Puritans, followers of William Whittingham who fled to Geneva to escape persecution during the reign of Catholic Queen Mary I (1554-1558). There, they translated the entire Bible from its original Hebrew and Greek, and introduced innovations that are reflected in the Bassandyne edition: division of the text into numbered verses, the use of a light Latin script instead of heavy Gothic lettering, and marginal interpretive notes providing a Calvinistic interpretation of the text. When the exiles returned to Elizabethan England, they took the Geneva Bible with them, where it remained the most popular Bible version among Puritans and Pilgrims alike.

Scotland, following the lead of its reformer John Knox, had embraced Calvinism. When Bassandyne and Arbuthnot petitioned the Scottish general assembly for permis-



Bassandyne New Testament title page. In 1576, 10-year-old James Stuart was the king “of Scottis” invoked here. In 1611, as king of England, he authorized a new Bible translation that would forever bear his name.

sion to print their Bible in 1575, not only was permission granted, but every parish church in Scotland was *required* to purchase the Bible, at a price of 4 pounds 13 shillings 4 pence. Parliament in 1579 also required every householder with rent of 300 marks per year and "every substantial yeoman or burgess" to have in their house a Bible in the vulgar language. Bassandyne's edition, the first English language Bible ever printed in Scotland, met this requirement and was apparently widely purchased.

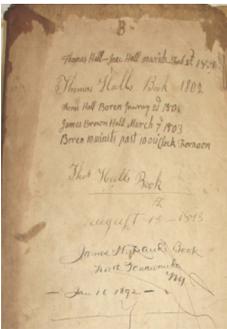
Despite its popularity, the Geneva translation used by Bassandyne had powerful critics. Its theological bias, which included opposition to bishops and a minimalist view of the sacraments, was anathema to Catholics and Anglicans. When James became king of England in 1603, he expressed displeasure with the Geneva Bible, particularly the marginal commentary. His new Authorized Version, published in 1611, imposed an Anglican viewpoint, yet its language often drew upon the work of the Geneva translators. One difference between the versions earned the Geneva Bible its nickname as the "Breeches Bible." Geneva translated Genesis 3:7 as "Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig tree leaves together, and made themselves *breeches*." Compare this with the King James Version: ". . . and made themselves *aprons*."

Since Bibles were by this time in common use at home, the "old" Geneva Bibles continued to be read for some time, making the Geneva version the most popular English-language Bible until 1644, according to some estimates. Scholars tell us that Shakespeare himself used the Geneva translation, perhaps along with other versions, for the many biblical allusions in his plays. It was also the version that the Pilgrims and Puritans first brought with them to America.

The Bassandyne Bible is the oldest item in our archives—indeed, it is almost ninety years older than the town of Falmouth itself. We naturally wondered if it could have been

brought here by one of the town's earliest settlers. The few genealogical entries that remain in the book, however, indicate otherwise. They concern a family named Hall and are dated in the early 1800s. Nothing appears in town vital records to match the Hall events documented in the Bible, and Hall is a name rarely seen in early Falmouth.

A better clue is written underneath the Hall list: "James H. Rand's



Above: Hall and Rand inscriptions in our Bible.

Right: Engraving, 1504, by Albrecht Durer. From the

Library of Congress website. Durer's vision of Adam and Eve is quite different from the descriptions found in both the Geneva and King James translations.



Book / North Tonawanda / NY / Jan 16 1892.” Here we do have a Falmouth connection. Arnold W. Dyer’s *Hotels and Inns of Falmouth* reports: “James Henry Rand, whose name became familiar from the Remington Rand typewriter, was a summer resident as early as 1908. His wealth enabled him to acquire many properties and not only restore them but to build and develop as much as 1,500 acres in North Falmouth.” The Rand connection explains how the Bible got to Falmouth and into the Society’s possession. It’s still unclear whether the Bible came down to James Rand through Hall family ancestors, or whether he purchased it for his private collection.

This Bible is a rare book; according to the English Short Title Catalogue, there are 33 known copies in existence. An internet request for evaluation of a Bassandyne Bible in relatively good condition yielded a value of \$2500 to \$7500.

Our volume, sadly, is in poor condition. The binding is loose and several pages are missing from the front, including the title page and the page with the famous “breeches” reference. The text begins with the 20th chapter of the book of Exodus and ends with the 2nd chapter of Philipians. In its connection with the history of English language Bibles and the Puritan movement, however, it has a value that will never diminish.

Terry White
& *Meg Costello*