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978-1-107-50495-0 - The Hexaplar Psalter: Being the Book of Psalms in Six English Versions

Edited by William Aldis Wright

Frontmatter

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EDITED BY

WILLIAM ALDIS WRIGHT, M.A.

VICE-MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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PREFACE

THE first complete English translation of the Bible was made by Miles Coverdale and printed in the year 1535. On the original title-page it is described as ‘faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn into Englishe.’ By ‘Douche’ is meant what we now understand by High Dutch or German, and in the Dedication to Henry VIII. he says further ‘I have...purely & faythfully translated this out of fyve sundry interpreters.’ So far as can be ascertained from internal evidence these were the Zurich Version (1524–1529) and the editions to 1534, Luther’s, finished in 1532, the Vulgate, Jerome’s Hebrew Version, and the version of Sanctes Pagninus (1528). In the Psalms he would get no help from his predecessor Tindale, whose work on the Old Testament did not extend beyond the historical books and the prophet Jonah. The place of printing and the printer are alike uncertain. The most probable conjecture is that it was printed at Zurich by Christopher Froschover who also printed the edition of 1550. In 1537 it was reprinted in England by James Nycolson, and the variations in the Psalter between the editions of 1535, 1537, and 1550 are given in the Appendix.

Under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell, Coverdale prepared a new edition of Matthew’s Bible, which was originally published in 1537, and was revised by Coverdale chiefly, in the Old Testament, with the help of Sebastian Münster’s Latin Version, which had appeared in 1534–5, too late to be of assistance to him in making his own translation. The result was the Great Bible, or, as it is called in Cromwell’s injunction to the clergy, ‘the hole byble of the largyest volume.’ It is sometimes known as Cromwell’s Bible. The printing was begun in Paris by Regnault and completed in London by Grafton and Whitchurch in 1539. A copy on vellum and illuminated, which was originally prepared for Cromwell himself, is in the Library of St John’s College, Cambridge.

This was again revised by Coverdale, still in the Old Testament under the influence of Münster, and with a Prologue by Cranmer, whence it was called Cranmer’s Bible, was issued in April 1540. It was succeeded by five other editions, in July 1540, November 1540, May 1541, November 1541, and December 1541, and the variations in the Psalter between these six editions and the Great Bible are given in the Appendix. With scarcely any exception the Prayer Book version of the Psalms is the work of Coverdale alone as the result of his three revisions.

The Geneva Version, so called from being the work of the English exiles at Geneva in the reign of Mary Tudor, was made partly under the influence of the French Protestant Version printed there in 1559, and it was published in the following year. The printer was Rowland Hall who at the same time carried on business in London. Whittingham, afterwards Dean of Durham, Gilby, and Sampson, are the three names which are associated in the translation.

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‘The Boke of Psalmes’ was separately printed in 1559 at Geneva also by Rowland Hall, and the edition does not differ from that which appeared next year in the complete Bible.

The Bishops’ Bible, so called from the Bishops who under Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, took part in the work, appeared in 1568. It was unfortunate in regard to the version of the Psalms, which is attributed to Thomas Becon, on the authority of Strype, but not with any certainty, for the initials T. B. at the end of the Psalter may also indicate Thomas Bickley, who was one of Parker’s chaplains and afterwards Bishop of Chichester. But whoever may have been responsible for it, it so little commended itself to popular favour, that after it was included with corrections in the quarto edition of 1569 it was printed in parallel columns with the Prayer Book Version in the second folio edition of 1572 and did not appear again till 1585, when it was printed for the last time. The variations between the editions of 1568 and 1569 are given in the Appendix.

The Authorised Version is printed from the first of the two issues which appeared in 1611.

The Revised Version is as it appeared in 1885.

In Coverdale and the Great Bible the verses are not marked, but they are supplied for convenience of reference.

The verses in the Great Bible version which are added from the Vulgate are printed in smaller type.

As a translation is incomplete without alternative marginal readings, these are given where they occur in all the versions, except the Great Bible and its six descendants, which have no marginal readings.

WILLIAM ALDIS WRIGHT.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
January 1911.

NOTES

Psalm vii. 1 (Geneva). For ‘me trust’ some copies have correctly ‘my trust.’

In the last sheet *f*(1) of the Bishops’ Bible some copies have a number of variations, none of which are of any importance except ‘Salou’ for ‘Salon’ in Psalm cxxxvii. 2.