The Printing of the Bible

Rev. John Fanestil, Ph.D.
FOCUS

• English-language print material
• England and early New England
• "early modern" (15th – 17th centuries)
• Protestant = “spectrum of dissent”
FOCUS

How did the rise of print technology change the relationship of English-speaking peoples to their sacred scriptures?

...

What does this suggest about our relationship to the scriptures?
WHOSE PRINT?

CROWN/CHURCH

1539 • “Great Bible”
1549 • Common Prayer
1592 • Bills of Mortality
1611 • King James Bible
WHOSE PRINT? WHOSE WORD?

**CROWN/CHURCH**

- 1539 • “Great Bible”
- 1549 • Common Prayer
- 1592 • Bills of Mortality
- 1611 • King James Bible

**SPECTRUM OF DISSENT**

- 1525 • Tyndale Bible
- 1537 • “Matthews” Bible
- 1557 • Geneva Bible
- 1563 • “Book of Martyrs”
CROWN/CHURCH

1539 • “Great Bible”
1549 • Common Prayer
1592 • Bills of Mortality
1611 • King James Bible

SPECTRUM OF DISSENT

1525 • Tyndale Bible
1537 • “Matthews” Bible
1557 • Geneva Bible
1563 • “Book of Martyrs”
“First Fruits” of Print in early modern ENGLAND

- Bibles
- Psalters
- Bills of Mortality
- Common Prayer
- Funeral Sermons
- Martyrologies
“First Fruits” of Print in early modern ENGLAND
“First Fruits” of Print in early modern ENGLAND

DEATH

- Mortality
- Masculinity
- Martyrdom
“First Fruits” of Print in early modern ENGLAND

DEATH
- Mortality
- Masculinity
- Martyrdom

What must I do to be saved ... from the power of sin and death?
ENGLISH UNDERSTANDINGS OF MARTYRDOM?

MARTYRDOM
• A martyr is someone who dies willingly for a sacred cause ...
• Martyrdom is a death deemed exemplary by others ...

MARTYROLOGY
• Martyrology is a catechetical practice of narrating or invoking stories of martyrs & martyrdom
• A martyrology is a cultural representation of martyrs & martyrdom (usually in print) ...
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“Every martyrdom is both a death and a story about a death” – Jolyon Mitchell
“Book of Martyrs”

John Foxe

"... we find thisforesaid Year of our Lord, 1450, to be Famous and Memorable, for the Divine and Miraculous Inventing of Printing ..."
Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs”

John Foxe

“... by reason whereof, as Printing of Books ministered matter of Reading, so Reading brought Learning, Learning showed Light,; by the brightness whereof blind Ignorance was Suppress'd, Error Detected, and finally God's Glory with Truth of his Word Advanced. And thus much for the worthy Commendation of Printing.”
Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs” (1597)
Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs” (1684)
The Booke of Psalmes

Collected into English Meter by Tho. Sternhold, Jo. Hopkins, W. Whittingham, and others, conferred with the Hebrew, with notes to explain them withall.

Newly set forth, and allowed to be sung in all Churches, of all the people together, before and after Morning and Evening Prayer, and also before and after Sermons. Moreover, in private houses, for their godly solace and comfort, laying aside all ungodly songs and ballads, which may tend to the nourishing of vice, and corrupting of youth.

London, printed by J. L. for the Company of Stationers, 1640.

Vol. provisiso Regis Regum.
USES OF PRINT
in early modern
ENGLAND & NEW ENGLAND

- Reading
- Reading aloud
- Teaching
- Learning
- Praying
- Playing
- Singing
- Worshiping
- Writing
- Meditating
“… when a Puritan adopted a prayerful attitude upon opening a Bible, his or her bodily posture (inclined head, eyes closed, folded palms) was unconsciously assumed, based on the thousands of times this ritualized activity had been performed from childhood on. Moreover, this posture and attitude predisposed the individuals to patterned thought processes and so to specific affective states … somatically invoked.”

Gary Ebersole, *Captured by Texts*
The Printing of the Bible

LESSONS

• TECHNOLOGY DRIVES EMBODIED BEHAVIOR

• CREATIVES ADAPT THE GOSPEL TO THE TECHNOLOGY

• CONTINUITY & DISCONTINUITY ... “OLD WINE IN NEW WINESKINS”
The Printing of the Bible

LESSONS

• PRINT AFFORDED CERTAIN ORIENTATION
  • LINEARITY -> “cover to cover”
  • A SINGULAR FOCUS -> “what must I do to be saved?”
  • PEOPLE “WROTE THEMSELVES INTO” THIS TRADITION -> “the martyr’s mirror”