

# The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

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## STATION 17: MATTHEW'S BIBLE



### The "Wifebeater's Bible"

The two editions of Coverdale's Bible of 1537, a folio and a quarto, were the first English Bibles printed in England, "set forth with the Kynge's most gracious license" (through the influence of Cromwell and Cranmer). But 1537 also saw the first publication of another milestone Bible, "Matthew's Bible." Probably printed in Antwerp (though published under the names of Grafton and Whitchurch of London), it can be considered the **real primary version of our English Bible**, as it welds together the work of Tyndale and Coverdale.

"Matthew's Bible" appeared under the pseudonym of one Thomas Matthew as translator; most consider this to have been an alias for John Rogers (born circa 1500, martyred in 1555), an ardent follower of Tyndale. The Pentateuch and especially the New Testament follow Tyndale's last published edition (1535), while Ezra through the end of the Apocrypha are Coverdale's. Joshua through Chronicles differ so much from Coverdale's that it is now generally accepted that this section stems from an unpublished manuscript of Tyndale's. Roger's work seems to have been confined to the marginal notes, and the "Prayer of Manasses" (given for the first time in English).

The importance of Matthew's Bible lies in its uniting the work of Tyndale and of Coverdale (nearly two thirds of both the Old and the New Testaments are pure Tyndale), and that it

became, with little change, the foundation for the "Great" and the Bishops' Bibles, which in turn were the basis for the King James Version. Thus, Matthew's Bible was the key "bridge" uniting Tyndale with the Bible we still use today.

The 1537 edition of 1,500 copies had the "Royal license," obtained by Cromwell and Cranmer in spite of (or in ignorance of) the Tyndale connection, even though it contained many of Tyndale's "pestilent glosses." Some examples of this Bible have had all the Prologues and notes throughout the volume obliterated by pen; this was done to escape penalties threatened in 1543 when Parliament proscribed all translations bearing the name of Tyndale, and required that the notes in all other editions or versions be removed or obliterated. For this reason, few examples of Matthew's Bible have survived to the present. With new, legal Bibles coming off the presses only a few years later, few would have had the courage to preserve these "troublesome" editions.

Though Tyndale's Testament (including copies which followed the exact text in Matthew's Bible) continued in print for some time, and Coverdale's Bible and Testament also appeared in new editions, Matthew's Bible was reprinted in whole only twice, in 1549 and 1551. During the reign of Edward VI (January 1547 - July 1553), some 40 editions of the Bible or Testament in English were printed; these included Matthew's, Coverdale's, Tyndale's Testament (including the Matthew's Bible version), as well as the "Great" Bible. Thus, several versions of the Word in English were offered for sale simultaneously, differing in notes or exact wording but all rooted in Tyndale's work, particularly his New Testament.

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## The "Wifebeater's Bible"

### 1549 Edition of Matthew's Version

*"The Byble, that is to  
say all the holy  
Scripture: In which are  
contayned the Olde and  
New Testamente, truly &  
purely translated into  
English, & now lately  
with greate industry &  
diligence recognized."*

**1549** - Printed in London by John Daye & William Seres. "Black Letter" type with woodcut initials and some illustrations. This edition was edited by Edmund Becke. This bible contains the famous note at the end of I Peter iii *"And yf she*

*be not obedient and  
healfull unto hym  
endeavoureth  
the feare of God into  
her heade  
she maye be compelled  
to learne her duitie  
and do it."*

*to beate*

*, that thereby*

Thus, it is popularly known as the

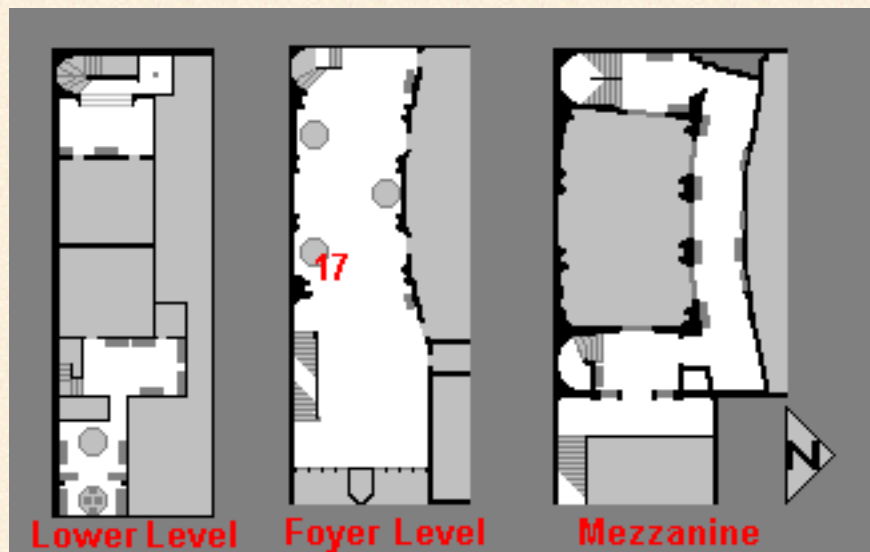
**"Wifebeater's" Bible.** (Herbert #74). The title page has a quotation:

*"Hearken to ye heavens,  
and thou earthe geve  
eare: For the Lorde  
speaketh."*

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## STATION LOCATION MAP

Below is a floor plan map of the Cathedral in 3 sections, one for each level. The first section is the Lower Level, the second is the Foyer Level, and the third is the Mezzanine Level. This station is located in the East Octagon on the Foyer Level at the red #17.



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