

The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

STATION 44:

TAVERNER'S VERSION

Liturgical Epistles and Gospels with Commentary

The First Bible Commentary in English



Circa **1540** - On the heels of Coverdale's and Matthew's Bibles, another version appeared in 1539 (the same year as the first "Great" Bible) under the authorship of one Richard Taverner (1505? - 1575), a scholar at both Oxford and Cambridge who was known for his Greek scholarship. Taverner was an employee of Thomas Cromwell (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) and was later appointed High

Sheriff of Oxfordshire under Queen Elizabeth. Perhaps the late appearance of his version and the fact that he was not a reformer had something to do with the lack of impact of his work on the subsequent history of the English Bible; in fact, his version is usually considered a sub-species of Matthew's Bible. Taverner's version introduced a few terms, most notably 'parable,' that are still in use, and substituted Anglo-Saxon words in many places, such as 'spokesman' for 'advocate.'

But Taverner's place in history is secure for the simple reason that he produced the **first Biblical commentary in English**. His

"Epistles and

Gospels wyth a brief

Postil..."

was intended to serve an increasingly literate laity by providing Biblical texts keyed to the liturgical calendar, with accompanying commentary. The work was structured in two main parts, a "Winter" and a "Summer" section each published separately, plus a similar work,

"The Gospels with

brief Sermons..."

keyed to the "Holy Days" of the Episcopal calendar. The works were published as separate parts, in two to five editions of each, beginning about 1540, though the printer, Richard Bankes, did not give the year of publication in his colophons. Even the exact sequence of the printings of the parts is unknown, though one scholar attempted to provide a sequence based on the wear to the woodcut borders of the title pages.

This example is remarkable for many reasons. First, the binding is completely original, blind-stamped calf over wooden boards. Second, and far more important, is that this is a truly rare work, and particularly so in its original unrestored condition. Of the separate parts of Taverner's Epistles, Gospels, and "Holy Days," this is **one of two** complete sets in the USA, the other being in the Huntington Library. Furthermore, this volume contains **two different** "Summer" sections (STC #2968.3 & #2968.5) as well as the "Winter" (STC #2967.7) and "Holy Days" (STC #2970.3), the latter two also recorded to be at Harvard. It is ironic that though Taverner's version was to prove an evolutionary "dead end" in the history of the English Bible, examples of it rank with the rarest books in the English language. As such, this book is one of the greatest treasures of the Dr. Gene Scott Collection - and one of the "Holy Grails" of Bible collecting.

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 Wall Case on the Foyer Level at the red #44.



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