

## THE BOSTON EDITION OF THE BASKETT BIBLE

BY CHARLES L. NICHOLS.

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**I**NVESTIGATION in the course of bibliographical study reveals many facts of great interest, not the least of which are in the field of lost or ghost books. Lost books are those evidence of the printing of which is reasonably certain; ghost books, those the existence of which depends upon probable rather than exact evidence. In either case the appearance of a single copy is the only proof positive of its existence, a result delayed frequently for many years.

One of the most interesting examples of this statement, and there are many, is the finding of the first edition of the Massachusetts Bay Colony Laws. Edward Johnson, in his "Wonder-working Providence"<sup>1</sup> of 1654, states that a collection of the existing laws was ordered to be made and printed by the General Court and that "in the year 1648 they were printed and to be seen of all men." As no copy turned up it was the general opinion that there was some error in the statement. Two hundred and fifty-five years after this Evans, in his "American Bibliography" expressed the opinion that this edition had been printed as stated but that the price of three shillings per copy<sup>2</sup> was prohibitive and that the edition was used as waste paper or burned. Five years later, in 1908, a copy was described in the Church catalogue and today this, the only known copy, after an interval of two

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<sup>1</sup>Prince Society Edition, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup>"Massachusetts Colony Records," Oct. 27, 1648, p. 262.

hundred and seventy years and more, has found its way into the library of Mr. Henry E. Huntington.

Of the many books relegated to this shelf of lost or unreal issues, some have been discovered like the above, some proved never to have existed and others still remain, like Mohammed's coffin, between heaven and earth. It is a volume which comes under the last classification which will be discussed in the present paper.

In his "History of Printing," issued in 1810, Isaiah Thomas records the publication, in Boston, of the first Bible in the English language in the British Colonies. From 1830 through the years following eager collectors of Americana searched carefully but in vain for this book and most of them finally concluded, in the words of George Bancroft,<sup>1</sup> that "to print that Bible in British America would have been piracy and the Bible, though printed in German and in a native dialect, was never printed there in English till the land became free." From that date it has been the almost universal opinion, on this side of the Atlantic as well as in England, that Thomas was in error and that such a book never existed.

A copy of this long sought book was finally described in the sale catalogue of the library of Thomas J. McKee in 1902 and the defenders of its title were correspondingly rejoiced. In 1919,<sup>2</sup> however, it was proved that this copy was not what was claimed but a common fraud due to a skillful change in the date on the title page and we are still searching for a genuine copy of this elusive book, the Baskett Bible of 1752.

The History of Printing by Isaiah Thomas was a pioneer work and like all such inevitably contains some errors. In 1810 Thomas had no local, state or national histories and few biographies in which to search for names dates or titles, so that his slender

<sup>1</sup>"History of the United States," 1874, vol. 5, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup>Nichols, C. L., "Is there a Mark Baskett Bible of 1752?" "Colonial Society Publications," vol. 21, p. 285.



sources of information seriously restricted his investigations. He visited and examined all the libraries within his reach and gathered from all over the land an extensive collection of newspapers, books, tracts and pamphlets from which he culled much precious information. Having had, for years, an extensive correspondence with printers and publishers throughout the British Colonies, in connection with the *Massachusetts Spy*, from these people he obtained a considerable amount of information, but sometimes casual and sometimes not to be relied upon. Under these circumstances the result was, and still is, a remarkable book which stands today as it stood more than one hundred years ago, as a valuable history of printing in America, the errors in which are largely those of detail rather than of fact. It is fair for us to remember this in our consideration of the words of Thomas regarding the Baskett Bible.

On page 107, of volume I, of the 1874 edition of the History of Printing, we read: "The booksellers of this town were enterprising. Kneeland & Green printed, principally for Daniel Henchman, an edition of the Bible in small quarto. This was the first Bible printed in America in the English language. It was carried through the press as privately as possible, and had the London imprint from the copy from which it was reprinted, viz.: 'London: printed by Mark Baskett, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty,' in order to prevent a prosecution from those in England and Scotland, who published the Bible by a patent from the Crown; or, *Cum privilegio*, as did the English universities of Oxford and Cambridge. When I was an apprentice [1756-1765], I often heard those who had assisted at the case and press in printing this Bible, make mention of the fact. The late Governor Hancock was related to Henchman and knew of the particulars of the transaction. He possessed a copy of this impression. As it has a London imprint, at this day it can be distinguished from an English

edition, of the same date, only by those who are acquainted with the niceties of typography. This Bible issued from the press about the time that the partnership of Kneeland & Green expired [1752]. The edition was not large; I have been informed that it did not exceed seven or eight hundred copies. An edition of the New Testament, in duodecimo, was printed by Rogers & Fowle [1740-1750], not long before this impression of the Bible came from the press, for those at whose expense it was issued. Both the Bible and the Testament were well executed. These were heavy undertakings for that day, but Henschman was a man of property; and it is said that several other principal booksellers of Boston were concerned with him in this business."

Again on page 123 of this edition Thomas writes: "During the partnership of Rogers & Fowle they printed an edition of about 2000 copies of the New Testament, 12 mo. for D. Henschman and 2 or 3 other principal booksellers, as has been already observed. This impression of the Testament, the first in the English language printed in this country, was, as I have been informed, completed at the press before Kneeland & Green began the edition of the Bible which has been mentioned. Zechariah Fowle, with whom I served my apprenticeship, as well as several others repeatedly mentioned to me this edition of the Testament. He was at the time a journeyman with Rogers & Fowle and worked at the press. He informed me that, on account of the weakness of his constitution, he greatly injured his health by the performance. Privacy in the business was necessary and, as few hands were intrusted with the secret, the press work was, as he thought, very laborious. I mention these minute circumstances in proof that an edition of the Testament did issue from the office of Rogers & Fowle because I have heard that the fact has been disputed."

Here we have a detailed statement by Thomas of the transaction and to it is added, in the paragraphs re-



lating to the Testament by Rogers & Fowle, more circumstantial evidence, as to the year of its printing, of large importance. Such a statement, with its wealth of detail, bears the earmarks of truth and of the belief of Thomas in the event. It must have been the result of a memory deeply impressed at the time when the facts were made known to him. This was a period in his life when he was most readily influenced by the statements of his fellow workers and a time, also, when he was striving to become a better printer than those about him, so that his mind was awake to all such facts relating to the art which he already loved and continued to hold in reverence to his life's end. Not only was this told him at the most impressionable period of his life, but he wrote of it in his *History of Printing* at the age of 55 or 56 in the enjoyment of his full mental faculties and ten years after his mind had been occupied with printing his own Bibles of 1791 and 1797. This occupation would have naturally recalled to mind other editions of the Bible and among them perhaps the details of this story. Certainly no one can read the account which he gave of the Boston edition without being strongly inclined to believe in the existence of such an occurrence. It seems to me that one of the most convincing points in the narrative is contained in the last sentence of the second quotation: "I mention these minute circumstances in proof that an edition of the Testament did issue from the office of Rogers & Fowle because I have heard that the fact has been disputed." This sentence shows that, at the time of writing this account, there was doubt about the printing of the duodecimo; that he must have sought confirmation of it from persons who might be expected to know of it, and that he must have considered the whole matter with great care in writing his story of it in order to overcome such doubt as he found to be felt regarding the truth of the whole transaction. The two undertakings are so intimately interwoven in this narrative that we are forced to accept the conclusion that a quarto was printed as well as the duodecimo.

Four cardinal points stand out preëminently in his description:

1. That Kneeland & Green printed an edition of the Bible for D. Henchman.
2. That the size was small quarto.
3. That the date was not after 1752.
4. That the imprint was "Mark Baskett."

Before considering these points, it will be well to learn something with regard to the Baskett Bible, which it is claimed was used as copy, and of the family which printed it. John Baskett,<sup>1</sup> who was called the greatest monopolist of Bibles that ever lived, leased on October 28, 1713, the Bible printing at Oxford and absorbed also that of London. He printed Bibles of various sizes from this time in Oxford and London and for a few years at Edinburgh also until his death in 1742. The printing was then continued by his two sons (presumably) Thomas and Richard in 1743-1745, and after the death of Richard in 1745 by Thomas alone, the imprint in Oxford reading: "Thomas Baskett, Printer to the University" and in London; "Thomas Baskett, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty and the Assigns of Robert Baskett." On the death of Thomas Baskett in 1761, his son, Mark, continued the business until 1769 when he sold out to John Eyre from whom it descended to the present firm of Eyre & Spottiswoode of London.<sup>2</sup> In or about 1763 the Oxford business was transferred to London, one office being used from this time for the entire establishment.

The name given to John Baskett, of monopolist of Bibles, was richly deserved, but also was earned by his efforts to publish a better Bible than had been executed before, as an inducement to a larger trade. His most ambitious attempt was the folio Bible of 1717, know

<sup>1</sup>Madan, "Chart of Oxford Printing," p. 21. Darlow & Moule, "Historical Catalogue of Printed Bibles," no. 706.

<sup>2</sup>The office building at No. 1 Printer Street has been occupied and used continuously since 1777, by the firm of Eyre & Spottiswoode.



today as "The Vinegar Bible" because of the well known error. Unfortunately so many other mistakes escaped the proof reader that this Bible was also named "A Baskett full of printer's errors." It had an engraved title page and many full page engravings throughout the text. He printed several copies of this edition on vellum, one of them being presented by him to the Bodleian Library at Oxford and two others are known today, one in the British Museum and the other in the library at Blenheim. During his life other special editions, with engraved title page and full page engravings, were issued from time to time in the various sizes which Baskett printed.

In our own collection are several Bibles, printed by this family, varying in size and date of printing, among them being an octavo dated 1725. This contains, with an engraved title page, two hundred and fifty-seven full page engravings bound in with the text, all the pages being enclosed within two red lines. This book was printed in London and the New Testament was dated 1724, a varying date being not uncommon when the parts were bound up together.

Baskett issued folio, quarto, octavo and duodecimo sizes yearly in Oxford and London sometimes more than one size, sometimes in more than one city the same year. Of the quarto size, which particularly interests us, he issued many from time to time, the first being dated 1715 and printed in London, and the following year the same size had the imprint of Oxford. Our copy of this size contains the Old Testament printed in Oxford in 1716, and the New Testament with the imprint of London in the year 1715. While many quarto Bibles were printed in Oxford by the Basketts from the year 1716, no quarto Bible was issued in London from 1715 until 1756. After 1761 one was printed in that city yearly by Mark Baskett until 1769. In this size, quarto, special editions were published also from time to time with engraved title pages and full page engravings, having two or even four engrav-

ings to the page. This special edition was always printed on better paper, with larger type—small Pica or English as it was then called—and with a larger page; the ordinary issue was printed in Long Primer and on common paper. The special edition had 56 lines to the full page, and the ordinary issue, 65 lines.

One of these special editions is of particular interest to us. When on April 30, 1789, George Washington was standing on the balcony of Federal Hall, on Wall Street, in New York City, prepared for his inauguration, it was discovered that no Bible had been provided. The Marshall of the occasion secured one from the Masonic Lodge, also on Wall Street, of which he was Master, and the oath of office was administered on that book. This incident was related in the *Worcester Telegram* of March 3, 1921, and a cut of that Bible, opened at the 50th chapter of Genesis, the page used by Washington, was reproduced in the article. The writer stated that, at the request of Warren G. Harding, an enthusiastic Mason, the same Bible was taken to the city of Washington by four members of the same Lodge to be used on the following day at Harding's inauguration. Being desirous of knowing the edition of that Bible I wrote to the Library of Congress and received reply that the imprint was: "London: Printed by Mark Baskett, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty and the Assigns of Robert Baskett. 1767." This Bible was the last of the special editions printed by the Baskett family, the business being sold out in 1769 as above stated.

The paper used in the ordinary editions of these Bibles was obtained from the same source for many years and had uniformly as water-marks the clover leaf and the fleur-de-lis. The type was also Long Primer in size and the ornaments in the headpiece and the initial letters were always the same from 1740 to 1760, as may be seen in the first page of text in the



quarto Bible dated Oxford, 1749, and reproduced here as an example.

Returning now to the four points in the narrative of Isaiah Thomas we take up the first:

I. That Kneeland & Green printed an edition of the Bible for Daniel Henschman.

Daniel Henschman began business in 1712 and became the principal bookseller and publisher in Boston, a position which he held until his death in 1761. He was a large dealer in English books and shared with London publishers in some of their greater undertakings, like the six volume edition of the works of Isaac Watts, in 1750, which he advertised in the Boston newspapers of that year. In 1749, Henschman had printed for him the "Life of David Brainerd" by Jonathan Edwards, a volume of 334 pages. The printed list of subscribers contains 1700 names largely from the New England Colonies, but among them 122 from New York, 200 from Pennsylvania and one from North Carolina, showing the large field at that time for religious works. This book was printed by Rogers & Fowle, the competitors of Kneeland & Green. Each of these firms produced books of several hundred pages yearly, some of which contained lists of subscribers, like "Defence of Infant Baptism" by Peter Clark, printed by Kneeland & Green with a list of three or four hundred subscribers.

Kneeland & Green were prominent printers in Boston from 1727 to 1752 when Timothy Green dissolved the partnership and went to New London to carry on the business of his invalid father. In addition to their regular work they were government printers from 1742 to 1752 and this part of the business was continued by Kneeland until his retirement in 1764. The government printing of the Acts & Laws and the Journal of the House amounted to one or more hundred folio pages each year. In addition to this the firm published a weekly newspaper and after the dissolution of partnership in 1752 the paper was continued by

Kneeland alone until it was stopped in consequence of the Provincial Stamp Act of 1755.

A somewhat careful study has been made by me of the books printed by Kneeland & Green during the period from 1749 to 1754 of which there are in our own library over 80% of the titles listed by Evans in addition to their newspaper and the government documents printed by them.

A study of the paper on which their books were printed reveals the usual variation in quality from the lower grades used in the newspaper to the paper employed for the government documents equal and perhaps superior to that grade used by Thomas Baskett in his special editions. This paper, while largely domestic, came also from abroad, Italy as well as England contributing to their stock. The exact watermark of the Baskett Bible was not found during this period, but it is seen in a book printed by Kneeland in 1756. Some of their paper contains both the clover leaf and the fleur-de-lis, not identical with but like the others and was, perhaps, a poorer grade of the same, it being the custom of paper makers to vary the watermark with the grade of their paper.

The ornamental headpiece, used in all the quartos of Baskett in that period, is made up from a figure recorded in the Caslon Type Specimen Book of 1763, as No. 12 of the Great Primer Flowers. While it does not occur in Caslon's Broadside of Type Specimens of 1734, I find the flower used in books printed by Kneeland & Green as early as 1719 and by other Boston printers of that period. It is a significant fact that of seven books printed by Kneeland & Green in 1752 four had this flower used as headpiece and of seventeen in 1753 twelve had it in the same position. Of the initial letters used in the Bible of 1749 there is no trace in any of the books or pamphlets before or after 1752 by Kneeland or any other printer on this side of the Atlantic. Whether these letters, and there are but five of them used in that Bible, were cut in wood or



type metal is uncertain, but probably the latter. It must have been easy to obtain them from the makers in England however and, indeed, there was, in Boston, at that period a man who could have cut them in wood or metal. James Turner worked in Boston from 1743 to 1756 and was a skilled engraver, as is evidenced by his cuts of Boston in the *American Magazine and Historical Chronicle* issued by Rogers & Fowle, the first successful magazine in the British Colonies.

Here then we find skill, financial ability and special material at hand, or within reach, to enable these men to produce a Boston edition of the Baskett Bible. Study of the titles recorded by Evans, of books issued by the various printers at this time, shows that there was no other firm of printers in Boston after the retirement of Rogers & Fowle in 1750 who approached Kneeland & Green in the size of their business or who are recorded as doing work for Daniel Henchman. The statement of Thomas then that they were the printers of this Bible seems probable.

II. The question of the size of the book next demands our attention, and Thomas calls it small quarto.

As the folio size was used ordinarily in the Churches and was in consequence called the pulpit or preaching Bible, and as the sale of this size would be more restricted than any other, we can be reasonably certain that the folio size was not used. The very elaborate ornamental initials at the beginning of each book in both testaments always found in this size would also render it unlikely that the folio would be reproduced in the Colonies. As the duodecimo New Testament had been issued by Rogers & Fowle in an edition of 2000 copies not long before "this impression of the Bible came from the press," it would seem improbable that another edition, even of the complete Bible, could have been sold so soon and we may therefore exclude this size.

The octavo and quarto sizes remain. It may be

stated here that no octavo Baskett Bible which I have seen has either headpiece, tailpiece or ornamental initials, as is the case with all editions in quarto, a fact which would render copying much easier.

It was this fact, lack of ornaments, which made it easier for Rogers & Fowle to reproduce their duodecimo. Of this, there is in consequence, no *known* copy, for with this ease of reproduction goes the practical impossibility of discovering a copy of such an issue by comparison with the English edition from which it was reproduced. The duodecimo and octavo sizes were used as personal Bibles, the smaller being later called the School Bible in contrast with the Church folio and the quarto Family Bibles.

With the large number of people interested in religious matters, as we have seen in the long lists of subscribers appended to the books then printed, and with the widespread custom of family worship, it may be inferred that a larger field of trade would be opened by the quarto than by any other size of Bible. We may therefore assume that Thomas was right in his statement that the size was quarto.

### III. Next comes the question of the year of printing and issue of the Bible.

Thomas wrote that the book, "issued from the press about the time the partnership of Kneeland & Green expired" which occurred in 1752, but nowhere does he record the exact year. He also states that the duodecimo of Rogers & Fowle was printed not long before this impression of the Bible and that "it was completed at the press before Kneeland & Green began their edition." As this first essay was also undertaken by Daniel Henchman and other booksellers of Boston, it is reasonable to assume that those copies had been or were being successfully disposed of before Henchman would enter upon a much greater and more expensive undertaking. Indeed it was probably the very success of that which was the deciding factor in the second venture.



It is fair to infer that, as Rogers & Fowle dissolved partnership in 1750, the duodecimo had been printed some time before that year and we may take 1745 and 1752 as the extreme limits of the two undertakings. As, however, Thomas states that the quarto was issued not long before the partnership of Kneeland & Green was dissolved, the time of printing would be nearer 1752 than 1745. To determine the length of time required to print such a book, quarto in size, containing more than 1200 pages it is necessary to know something of the number of workmen in the office, the amount of type on hand and the quantity of yearly output of the printers of that Bible. Evans lists the number of books printed by this firm in 1749 as fourteen, comprising about 400 pages with 300 folio pages of Government documents; in 1750, as twenty books consisting of 600 pages with 280 of Government printing; and in 1751, twenty-seven titles which had 600 pages with 160 folio pages, these in addition to the weekly newspaper. These figures, all that are available, do not represent a very large shop nor can they guide us as to the length of time required to print the 1200 pages of the Bible in addition to their yearly output. For further light let us turn to the work of Isaiah Thomas, forty years later, upon his Bibles of 1791.

In 1789 Thomas issued a Prospectus soliciting subscribers to a Quarto Bible for which he had already secured special type and special paper. From a letter in the possession of the writer we learn that he began printing it in September 1790 and completed both the quarto and folio Bibles in December 1791, a period of about fifteen months. We have records of twelve books printed by him in 1790 aggregating 4000 pages, and in 1791, of fifteen books of 1650 pages which added to those of the two Bibles would make about the same number although much more in amount of actual work because of the size of the Bible pages. During these years Thomas had, in Worcester, four or five presses, with eight or ten apprentices and there

must have been about the same number of journeymen. Even under these circumstances it seemed to me almost impossible that the two Bibles could have been completed in so short a time.

Study of these two Bibles, however, showed a considerable saving of time in the process. Both Bibles were printed with the same type, in the case of the folio the page being given dignity by leading the type with increased length of page and narrower columns. It was discovered, by comparison of broken and imperfect type in sections of the text with the same sections in each Bible that both books were carried along in succession, signature by signature and after the signature of one issue had been printed the type was not distributed but the lines were put again into the composing stick and rearranged for the varying width of the column of the other issue. This process is employed in every printing office when changing words or sentences in galley-proof, but Thomas used it in an entire book, thus making a material saving of time in place of distributing and recomposing. As the Prospectus of 1789 spoke of the quarto and made no mention of a folio Bible it may be inferred that the latter was an after thought perhaps because of a suggestion of the above method. This whole transaction meant the possession of a large office, with long preparation and careful management of time and work on the part of Mr. Thomas, an extraordinary result particularly when we consider that he had just started his Boston business of Thomas & Andrews in addition to his work in Worcester.

Comparison of these two firms of Kneeland & Green and Thomas shows that the latter had more than double the amount of work and that he must have had a much larger plant to enable him to print these two Bibles in the fifteen months recorded. In a smaller office and without the special type it can be fairly stated that Kneeland & Green would have required at least 12 or 14 months for their work on the Bible.



Taking into consideration the completion and binding of the books the transaction must have seen a year and a half elapse before distribution could have been effected. If, as Thomas states, the Kneeland & Green edition was finished not long before 1752, the time of dissolution of their partnership, the year 1750 may be taken as the time of beginning the work.

The Bible was printed for Daniel Henschman and other booksellers of Boston of whom there were, at this time, seven or eight who had been established twenty-five or thirty years. How many of these entered into this transaction is not known but one thing is certain that competition entered into the matter of the sale of the books and we can be sure that all who did take part would demand and receive their proportion at the same time and with the same date on the title page. This means that the whole edition was finished and dated alike, as was pointed out by Mr. Wilberforce Eames, and that the suggestion of varying title pages and varying dates can be therefore excluded from the discussion.

This book was to be sold by the dealers, not by subscription but as imported, and their profit must have been made out of the difference in the cost of printing in Boston and London.<sup>1</sup> The quality of the English edition had to be maintained, however, for, the book being sold as imported, the purchaser would be the severest critic of any differences in condition or appearance. If the truth of the transaction had been told any one, few persons would buy a Bible, of all books, with such a history and its possibilities.

While we have concluded that the whole edition must have had the same year for its date and that the date was not before 1750 or after 1752, we have, as yet, no sufficient data to decide the exact year which appeared on the title page of this Bible.<sup>2</sup> Kneeland &

<sup>1</sup>Isaiah Thomas stated that his royal quarto Bible would be sold for seven dollars in Worcester, while that of the English trade cost eight or nine dollars.

<sup>2</sup>It is a curious and perhaps significant fact that there is no quarto Baskett Bible with date 1750 or 1751 in any of the great libraries of Great Britain or America.

Green may have retained the date of the English edition used as copy though it is doubtful if the booksellers would have accepted this, and it seems more probable that they would use the date of completion of their labors, as that would give the booksellers the argument of a recent importation and an up to date Bible.

IV. The fourth point for our consideration is the question of the imprint, which was, Thomas says: "London; Mark Baskett, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty."

If my reasoning is correct it would appear that Kneeland & Green printed in quarto form a Bible not far from 1752, taking as their copy one of the issues of Thomas Baskett. It behooves us to discover, if possible, which of them could have been used.

There is no general catalogue of the complete issues of the Baskett Bibles. The British Museum has a large number of them, the list being available in their printed catalogue. The Bodleian Library of Oxford has also a large collection and a third is in the library of the British and Foreign Bible Society, of which collection Darlow & Moule have compiled an elaborate Historical Catalogue. From this catalogue it will be seen that in no other part of England was a quarto Bible issued by any other printer between 1740 and 1752 so that other Bible printers need not be considered. Among the issues of Thomas Baskett a quarto was printed in the years 1746, 1747, and 1749, but none in 1748, 1750 or 1751 the next being in 1752. These were all issued in Oxford, not London, and had the imprint "Thomas Baskett, Printer to the University." One of these three Bibles was with little question used as copy in this reprinting. The one dated 1746 had a number of errors of the compositor and as one of the others was without doubt available either that of 1747 or 1749 was the probable copy.

These three, however, resemble each other so closely in text, in head piece and in ornamental initials that,



except for the possible use of the date, it does not matter which of them was employed as copy unless textual errors, which may have varied in them, were copied in the new edition. The point it is desired to bring out is that "Thomas Baskett; Printer to the University, Oxford" must have been the imprint of the new edition, not; "Mark Baskett; Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, London." which imprint was not used on a Bible of Baskett from 1716 until 1761. It is an interesting fact that there is no record that Thomas had in his possession a copy of any Baskett Bible at the time of writing his *History of Printing* or later in his collections. And yet he must have examined somewhere a Mark Baskett Bible, by chance, when seeking to make his detailed statement. It may have been one of the thirty Bibles used by the Clergy of Worcester county when deciding, for Mr. Thomas, the most correct text for the Thomas quarto of 1791. Wherever he secured his imprint it was a mistake as we have seen and this mistake has always misled those who have been searching for a copy of this edition. For this reason it may be well to repeat that as the Boston edition was printed in, or about the year, 1752 and as we may infer that it had the same date, which date was nine or ten years before the first of the Mark Baskett Bibles of the 1760s was issued, search for a copy of this book can never be rewarded by study of the Mark Baskett editions.

There is one more point of importance made by Thomas, in his account of the Bible. He states that both Bibles were well executed and, "at this day it (quarto) can be distinguished from an English edition of the same date only by those who are acquainted with the niceties of typography." The exact meaning of that expression may be fraught with evidence toward the discovery of a copy of the Bible. If it refers to textual errors it does not follow that discovery of these requires typographical knowledge, but if broken type or imperfect letters, or those from the wrong font or



¶ The First BOOK of MOSES,

CALLED

# GENESIS.

## CHAP. I.

*1 The creation of heaven and earth, 3 of the light, 6 of the firmament, 9 of the earth separated from the waters, 11 and made fruitful, 14 of the sun, moon, and stars, 20 of fish and fowl, 23 of beasts and cattle, 26 of man in the image of God. 29 Also the appointment of food.*

Before  
Christ  
4004.  
\* Psa. 11. 6. & 136. 5.  
Acts 14. 17.  
Hebr. 11. 5.



**I**N the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.  
2 And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

*3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.  
4 And God saw that the light that it was good.*

13 And the evening and the morning were <sup>Before</sup> the third day. <sup>Christ</sup>

14 ¶ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth,

18 And to rule over the day, and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.  
20 ¶ And God said, Let the waters bring forth

BASKETT BIBLE, 1746



¶ The First BOOK of MOSES,

CALLED

# GENESIS.

## CHAP. I.

*1 The creation of heaven and earth, 3 of the light, 6 of the firmament, 9 of the earth separated from the waters, 11 and made fruitful, 14 of the sun, moon, and stars, 20 of fish and fowl, 23 of beasts and cattle, 26 of man in the image of God. 29 Also the appointment of food.*

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2 And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

*3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

13 And the evening and the morning were <sup>Before</sup> the third day. <sup>Christ</sup>

14 ¶ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth,

18 And to rule over the day, and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.  
20 ¶ And God said, Let the waters bring forth

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errors by the compositor, these would be more difficult for the non-printer; and if to the character of the page, its ornaments and letters, that too would lead to the inference that it did refer to these latter rather than to textual errors alone.

A curious example of carelessness in printing occurs on the first page of the text of Genesis in the 1746 quarto of Thomas Baskett. On this page the period following the heading is out of line, the ornamental initial "I" is upside down and the parts which make up the head-piece are, in several elements very irregularly set up. It is doubtful if these points would attract the eye of the general reader as there are no textual errors on the page although the text is very irregularly printed, but they are cited as an example of the kind of investigation required in studying such questions.

On the other hand let me present an example of real accomplishment when minute investigation is faithfully carried out. Dr. Schwenke, by such study of the Gutenberg Bible, has proved that the book was printed in ten sections on six presses, that the body of the type was twice filed down from 40 to 41, and finally to 42 lines to the page. The first thirty pages were printed on three presses and when it was decided to increase the size of the edition these pages were reset and reprinted. The paper for this increase in numbers was purchased in large quantities instead of small additional lots. All of these conclusions were reached by careful study and comparison of a few of the forty-two copies of this first Bible printed with movable type. When such material results follow the careful investigations of the student we need not despair of reaching a happy solution of our problem, even though we have, as yet, no known copies to compare with each other or with known English Bibles.

In conclusion it should be said that the aim of this study is, not to present definite facts for that is not possible with our present knowledge, but to define the limits of that knowledge and to state fairly reasonable conclusions and inferences.

While the reliability of the general description by Isaiah Thomas of this Boston Bible seems strong in itself, the fallibility of human memory is so well known that only contemporary evidence can give strength to his statement and show how much of his detail can be relied upon. Such evidence as is available in the various branches of work at that period has been presented to you and as a summary we can state with reasonable confidence:

1. That Kneeland & Green did print a quarto Bible for the booksellers of Boston between 1750 and 1752.

2. That whatever the exact date of issue, it was the same for the whole edition, which was small.

3. That it resembled the quarto Bibles of 1747 and 1749 with the imprint of Thomas, not Mark Baskett.

4. That no Bible of Mark Baskett of London, printed between 1761 and 1769 could be part of the Boston edition.

5. That of this small edition, there must be a considerable number still in existence in families, which contain their family records because such are preserved with more care, and which have been handed down from generation to generation; or perhaps a few may have been deposited for safe keeping in our libraries, of which we have several examples, though of different imprints, like those of the Paine and Chandler families.

It is not unlikely that examination and careful comparison of these family Bibles will reveal the long sought copy of this edition, which can then be called our first Bible in the English language printed in the British Colonies.



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