

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON RATCLIFF AND RANGER BINDINGS

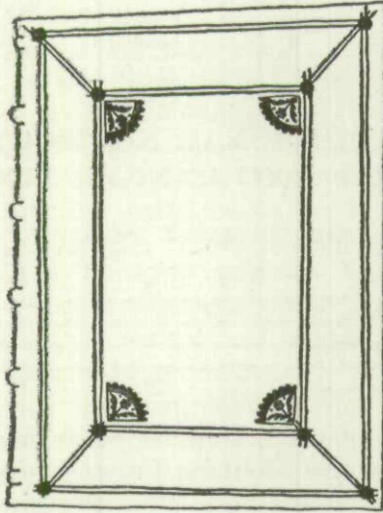
BY THOMAS J. HOLMES

NOTE.—At the end of Mr. Holmes's paper is appended a description of five bindings at Hartford by Mr. William G. Land, assistant in the Connecticut Historical Society. Mr. Land very kindly furnished these descriptions in a communication addressed to the Librarian of the Society, but for convenience they are printed as an appendix to Mr. Holmes's "Additional Notes."

A GROUP of three volumes of ancient pamphlets bound in rusty-looking brown sheepskin, in the Mather library in the Society's collection, offer a very interesting problem concerning the history of their bindings. These three volumes are finished with tools that were at one time owned by John Ratcliff.¹ Nevertheless, though Ratcliff's tools are stamped upon all three of these bindings, our examination will show that only one binding was done by Ratcliff, who executed it possibly about 1661 to 1665; the other two being from the hand of his successor, Edmund Ranger, who bound them late in the year 1686 or early in 1687. Let us examine the earliest binding first, that done by Ratcliff.

The volume is a small quarto measuring $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2} \times 3$ inches. The sheepskin cover, though now a russet brown, bears evidence indicating that originally it was stained black. The decoration consists of a two-line border on the sides enclosing a panel of similar double lines with short diagonal double lines connecting the panel with the border at each of the corners. Within the corners of the panels is a fan-shaped tool with a

¹See a paper: "The Bookbindings of John Ratcliff and Edmund Ranger, Seventeenth Century Boston Bookbinders," by Thomas J. Holmes in the Proceedings for April 1928 in vol. 38, pp. 31-50, and printed separately, with a correction in the title of the third plate. The three volumes referred to are in the Society's pamphlet collection, numbered 703, 787 and 838.



DESIGN OF BINDING BY
JOHN RATCLIFF DONE ABOUT 1665,
DESCRIBED AS THE FIRST EXAMPLE.

conventionalized fleuron consisting of a floret supported with scrolls of foliage growing outwards from the corners.¹ A fleuron with a round outline, about one-fourth inch in diameter, is impressed upon the corners of the panel and the corners of the border where the diagonal lines intersect them.

The back is divided into five panels by the four bands upon which the book is sewn, and is finished with a square-dotted roll. The edges of the boards are finished with the same square-dotted roll.² The tooling is in blind throughout, that is, no part is stamped in gold. However, the second panel of the back bears a brown morocco label, diagonal-grained and rubbed down smooth, upon which is lettered in gold the title: "POLITICAL TRACTS." The upper and

¹This fan-shaped tool was used by John Ratcliff in the decoration of the binding on "The General Laws and Liberties 1672-75" owned by the society, and which was reproduced in the third plate illustrating the paper mentioned in note 1, page 291.

²This square-dotted roll was identified as one of Ratcliff's tools, in the paper mentioned in note 1, page 291. See the first and second plates illustrating that paper.

lower edge of the label is finished with two gold lines. The third panel bears the dates: "1640-1660," lettered directly upon the cover leather, also in gold. This gold lettering appears not to be contemporary with the binding. It seems to be fresh. The label is pasted over the dotted roll at the upper and lower edge of the second panel, thus indicating the label to have been added after the original decoration had been completed. The diagonal graining of the morocco of the label indicates 1800 or later, when straight-graining, diagonal-graining and square-graining of morocco for bindings came into general use in England and the United States. The label and lettering seem to me to have been done about 1815. And 1815 seems also to have been the approximate date when new paper linings and fly leaves were put in the volume. The paper is not a laid paper such as was in general use for books before 1800. It is an early wove paper which came into general use about 1810. Upon the front board lining is pasted the bookplate of Isaiah Thomas. It may have been he who caused the new linings to be inserted in the book, and the label and lettering to be added. Upon the front fly leaf is written, in the hand of Isaiah Thomas, a partial list of the contents of the volume.

The volume contains twenty-five pamphlets, the first of which was of larger size than the rest. This large pamphlet has been cut down at the top and bottom edges until they are level with the book; but the fore-edge of the pamphlet projects seven-eighths of an inch beyond the rest of the volume, giving the book a very odd and crude appearance. All of the pamphlets deal with the questions of state and church government. Three of the pamphlets lack title-pages, therefore have no imprint indicating their origin, though they seem to be of London printing. Twenty of them bear London imprints; one was printed at Oxford and one at Edinburgh. Their inclusive dates are 1641 to 1659. Two of the pamphlets, one printed in 1651 and

the other in 1652, bear on their title-pages the autograph of "Thomas Shepard 1660." This Thomas Shepard (1635-1677) was of Charlestown, the second of his name. He was the son of Thomas Shepard of Cambridge (1605-1649).

Some of the earlier pamphlets contain manuscript annotations which might be in the hand of the first Thomas Shepard. The rest of the pamphlets in the volume, seven in number, published after his death, were doubtless acquired by his son who added his autograph in 1660. These seven cover the period 1649 to 1659. The autograph dated 1660 on two of the title-pages—bound toward the middle of the volume, and the inscription in an inner position on the page indicating that the inscription was made when the pamphlet was still separate—quite clearly places a date before which the book was not likely to have been bound.

John Ratcliff is on record as having come to Boston about 1661 to 1663. This volume in the details of its construction bears unmistakable traces of his handiwork—the irregularity of the squares and the crudity of the workmanship embodied in the rude strength of the volume, are characteristic of his work, probably even of a very early, scarcely mature, example. The fleuron on the sides is found upon another binding which has been identified as his work, and the square-dotted roll has been traced unmistakably to his shop.¹

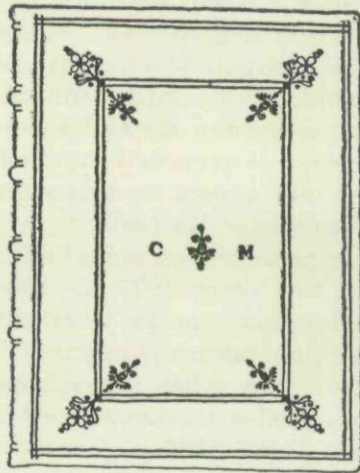
It appears safe to conclude that the volume was bound to the order of the second Thomas Shepard, and was made up principally of pamphlets which were originally owned by his father, and that John Ratcliff bound the book, probably very shortly after he came to Boston, possibly about 1665.

We cannot trace when the volume came to the Mather library, but it is likely to have been inherited in 1677 by the third Thomas Shepard who was born in 1658 and died in 1685, and who was a friend of Cotton Mather.

¹The fleuron is the fan-shaped tool mentioned in note 1 on page 292.

After the death of the third Thomas Shepard, the library may have been sold and Cotton Mather may have purchased the volume at that time. The binding is still in an excellent state of preservation, though the repeated dripping of a small quantity of water on a part of the top edge of the book at some period early in its history has produced mildew and started decay down into some of the leaves. The decay has already eaten away a small portion of the paper and has made a cavity in the edge.

The second volume to be considered is a quarto volume measuring $7\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{8} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$ inches. It is bound in brown sheepskin, sprinkled with black stain. The finishing consists of a two-line border enclosing a panel of similar double lines. At the corners of the panel are impressed a flourish of tools, one within the border and another on the outside. The outside tool has been identified as having been used by John Ratcliff.¹ The tool within the corners of the panel is impressed also in



DESIGN OF BINDING BY
EDMUND RANGER DONE ABOUT 1686-7,
DESCRIBED AS THE SECOND EXAMPLE.

¹This tool on the outside of the corner of the panels was used by Ratcliff as the center ornament in his gilt-tooled binding shown in the second plate illustrating the paper mentioned in note 1 on page 291.

the center. On either side of this center tool are impressed in gold the initials "C. M." This gold lettering, on both the front and the back boards, seems to be contemporary with the binding. The back of the book is finished with transverse creases of double lines on either side of the four bands, dividing the back into five panels. The edges of the boards are finished with a single line. All of the finishing except the lettering is in blind. The edges of the volume are neatly trimmed and were stained with a green stain. The color of the stain has faded from the fore-edge and top, but the bottom edge is still green. The squares of the boards are neatly and evenly fitted to the edges of the book. A worked headband, originally of various colored thread, the colors of which are now faded to be almost indistinguishable, ornaments the top and bottom edges of the book at the folds where the cover leather is turned over at the top and the bottom of the backbone.

There is precision evident everywhere in this binding, evidence of a high degree of skill in the hand which fashioned it, evidence again of a well co-ordinated mind directing that skill. No binding that I have so far traced to the hand of John Ratcliff has exhibited the craftsmanship which is recorded in the fashioning of this book. I should expect to trace the binding to another hand than that of Ratcliff.

The volume contains sixteen pamphlets, published in England during the years 1619 to 1661. Fourteen were issued in London, one in Cambridge, and one without place of publication is apparently of London printing. Eleven deal with the subject of church government, four deal with theological questions, and one is on divorce (John Milton's second pamphlet on that subject, 1644). Twelve bear the autograph, or annotations, in the hand of Increase Mather, written doubtless at the various times when the pamphlets were acquired—when Mather read them and added them to his library.

Increase Mather was born in 1639. Some of the pamphlets published before he was born or before he had reached the years of mature understanding, may have been purchased by his father Richard who was born in 1596 and who came to Boston in 1635 and died in 1669. But no inscription in Richard's autograph anywhere in the volume confirms his ownership. On the other hand, Increase himself may have bought all of the pamphlets in the volume during his four years sojourn in England from August 1657 to June 1661; in which case, only three pamphlets, issued during these years, were purchased mint new when they were published. The other thirteen, with dates 1619 to 1653, could well have been the fruits of his browsings in the second-hand bookstores of London. These earlier pamphlets have individual time stains and marks of usage distinguishable from the general discoloration common to the bound volume, indicating a second-hand condition anterior to the binding.

In any case, it is clear that all of the pamphlets belonged to Increase Mather, yet the initials "C. M." on the sides of the binding seem to indicate that the volume was bound for the younger Mather. Cotton Mather, however, was born in 1663, two years after the latest publication in the volume.

A list of contents of the volume written on a fly leaf inserted at the beginning of the volume is in the hand of Increase Mather. The preparation of this manuscript table of contents by Increase Mather himself would indicate that it was he who brought the pamphlets together and caused the volume to be bound. When did he do this? The imprint of the latest publication in the volume, 1661, proves that the book was bound after that date. The inclusion of the date 1663 with one of Mather's autographs, defers the probable date of the binding two years more, until 1663, or later. But it is scarcely probable that in that year, the year of Cotton Mather's birth, he would stamp the initials of a new-born infant upon this volume of weighty polemical treatises.

The initials seem to suggest that the volume was probably made to be used as a gift by the elder Mather to the younger. The occasion of the gift and the binding we can quite well infer was one which revived interest in the pamphlets for Increase Mather, to cause him to select them and to have them bound. The varied state of the autographs, and the used condition of the pamphlets indicate that these old pamphlets had long since been read and shelved away. What brought them anew to the elder Mather's mind, and what directed them to the attention of the younger Mather or designed them for him, to cause the insignia of ownership to be stamped in gold upon the binding?

Do the pamphlets themselves offer any clue? All of them would be of interest to a clergyman. Most of them, as stated, concern church government. Prominent among these is a considerable one with four preliminary leaves and 128 pages of text, dealing with the liturgy and the origins of the Book of Common Prayer. The work is anonymous but has been wrongly attributed to Isaac Casaubon, by Darcie, the translator. Its title is: "The Originall of Popish Idolatrie or The Birth of Heresies . . . Being a True and Exacte Description of such Sacred Signes, Sacrifices and Sacraments as have bene instituted and ordained of God since Adam. With a newe source and Anatomie of the Masse, first gathered out of sundrie Greeke and Latine Authors, as also out of diverse learned Fathers. . . . Printed in the year of our Saviour, 1630." (It is listed in Pollard & Redgrave: *Short-Title Catalogue*, 1926, No. 4748).

This pamphlet offers us our clue. In 1686 the use of the Common Prayer Book in church service, obnoxious to Puritans, was by government agents from London forced upon Bostonians. Massachusetts, her charter abrogated, could not resist, but she could protest.

Increase Mather, leading Boston clergyman, took down his authority and refreshed his memory about the pagan origins of liturgies and about Numa Pompil-

ius being the originator of certain ceremonies surviving in the Roman Catholic Church and in the English Episcopal Church; he consulted other authors and wrote a pamphlet embodying these views. Its title is: "A Brief Discourse Concerning the unlawfulness of the Common Prayer Worship." Cotton Mather's Diary reveals that he too was interested in the subject, and that it was he who requested the father to write the Brief Discourse; and Cotton assisted in the publication of the work. (See Cotton Mather: *Diary*, i, pp. 133-134; and Increase Mather: *A Brief Discourse*, p. 21 of the Boston edition.)

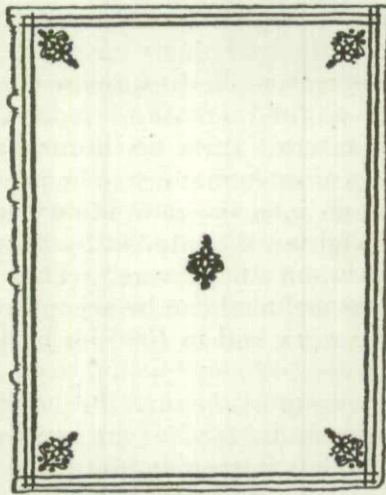
In 1686 Cotton Mather was twenty-three years old. In 1685 he had been ordained pastor over the Second Church and assistant to his father. In May 1686 he was married. He left his father's home and his father's extensive library and went to reside for some months at the home of his father-in-law Phillips in Charlestown. A few months later, about September, he moved back to Boston and began housekeeping on his own account. (See Cotton Mather: *Diary*, i, 128, 129)

May it not be reasonable to suppose then, that here were the occasions for Increase to make a selection of some books of interest from his library and to have them bound in a suitable manner to be presented to his son Cotton, to go into the new library and the new home, and to heighten the interest by putting C. M.'s initials in gold upon the covers? That the liturgy book of 1630 was included can be accounted for by the new interest the work had in 1686 for both father and son.

It would then seem likely that the book was bound late in 1686 or early in 1687—four or five years after John Ratcliff had left Boston and returned to England. One of John Ratcliff's tools was used in decorating the covers but it was the hand of his successor, Edmund Ranger, who applied the tools and who so skillfully fashioned this volume.

The third volume in this group is a quarto, measuring $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{7}{8} \times 2$ inches. It is bound in brown sheepskin, lightly sprinkled with black stain. The finishing consists of a wide two-line border on the sides. The same double-line roll traverses the back on either side of the four bands, which divide the back into five panels. At each corner of the field within the border on the sides, is impressed a fleuron which is repeated in the center. This fleuron has been identified as having belonged to John Ratcliff.¹ The edges of the boards are finished with a single line.

Though the engraved tool used in the decoration, at one time belonged to Ratcliff, the excellent workmanship embodied in the structure of the book unmistakably reveals the capable hand of Ratcliff's successor, Edmund Ranger. The edges of the book are neatly trimmed and were sprinkled with a green stain of the same color as that which was used in wholly coloring the edges of the volume in our second description



DESIGN OF BINDING BY
EDMUND RANGER DONE ABOUT 1686-7,
DESCRIBED AS THE THIRD EXAMPLE.

¹It is the same tool as that mentioned in note 1 on page 295.

above. The color of the sprinkling has faded almost completely away from the top edge and the fore-edge, but the bottom edge retains much of its freshness. A neatly worked headband of colored thread, now faded, ornaments the edges at the top and the bottom of the back, similar to the headband described in Ranger's binding in our second example. The boards are well squared with the book, though the front board has been slightly moved upward during the covering. The back is well formed and well constructed. The volume is altogether a neat, trig, orderly piece of binding, in all the details here enumerated, and also in a number of points which for brevity are here omitted. It is very characteristic of the work of Edmund Ranger.

The volume contains seven pamphlets published in the years 1641 to 1661. Five of their imprints are of London, and two pamphlets without imprints seem to be of London origin. These seven may, like the sixteen in our second example, have been part of the fruits of Mather's English bookshop gleanings in 1657 to 1661. All of the pamphlets deal with the question of church government. Two of them are from the pen of John Milton—one published in 1641, the other about that time—are charming in thought and graceful in style. (In the preface to the dated pamphlet: "The Reason of Church-government Urg'd against Prelaty," Milton deploras the embodiment of threatenings in the framing of laws; and suggests with Plato that laws might be set forth with such eloquence as "would incite, and in a manner, charme the multitude into the love of that which is really good, as to imbrace it ever after, not of custome and awe, which most men do, but of choice and purpose, with true and constant delight.") Three of the pamphlets bear the autograph of Crescentius Matherus. One has suffered an incision in the title-page and a piece has been removed from its margin; perhaps for the sake of an autograph it may have contained—which might have been

Mather's. An inserted fly leaf at the beginning of the volume contains an autographed table of contents, written in the hand of Increase Mather.

It seems quite safe to conclude that the pamphlets were his, and were brought together by his hand and caused by him to be bound. On the first title-page in the volume, occurs a dated autograph: "Samuel Mathers Book 1723."

It then seems probable that the volume was bound for Increase Mather and that it remained in his library until his death in 1723, at which time it passed into the possession of his grandson who was then eighteen years of age, and who inscribed his autograph in the volume when it came into his possession.

The question now remains: when was the volume bound? Again we will turn for our clue to the contents of the volume. The pamphlets, as stated, deal with questions connected with church government. Curiously, two of them deal with the liturgy—its anatomy and history, and it cannot be doubted that they came anew to Increase Mather's attention for re-reading and study in the autumn of 1686 when he was writing his "Brief Discourse Concerning the unlawfulness of the Common Prayer Worship." It would seem then, that he brought these pamphlets together and had them bound at that time.

The close similarity of the binding and treatment of this volume, with the binding described in our second example above, point to an identity of the binder of both volumes. This seems to confirm our view that our third example, as well as the second, was done by Edmund Ranger, and the internal evidence we have adduced seems to indicate that they were done contemporaneously, late in the year 1686 or early in 1687.

FURTHER NOTES ON RATCLIFF AND RANGER BINDINGS

BY WILLIAM G. LAND

The Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society for April 1928 containing an interesting article

on the old Boston bookbinders, Ratcliff and Ranger, has led to much searching and to several very pleasant explorations into the stacks of the Connecticut Historical Society Library. Four bindings by those old workmen in the possession of the Society are listed below, and an additional one was found in the private collection of the Librarian, Mr. Albert C. Bates.

To find such a number in such a small space was indeed gratifying, but in an effort to identify the binder of Willard's *Covenant Keeping* it was found that the fly leaves of the copy are, as far as known, the only two known leaves of the first edition of Mrs. Rowlandson's Narrative. They are not the same as the Prince facsimile, the copy of the second edition in the British Museum, or the copy belonging to Mr. Wilberforce Eames. This discovery raises the question as to whether this first edition of Mrs. Rowlandson's Narrative was printed at Samuel Sewall's press in Boston, where Willard's work was printed, or at Cambridge by Samuel Green, as suggested by Evans, No. 331.

1. THE BOOK OF GENERAL LAWS . . . OF CONNECTICUT

Cambridge. Printed by Samuel Green 1673.

This small folio ($6\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{3}{4}$ inches) is bound in calf, and the covers decorated with a border of two parallel solid lines. At each corner there is a fleuron of three buds, the same as shown in the plate of Mather's *Call From Heaven* (A. A. S. Proc. vol. 38, p. 38), without any center decoration. Eight similar parallel lines are tooled across the back.

The cover is of built-up pasteboard of irregular shape, varying from the rectangle as much as $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch in length, and $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch in width. The pages are sewed with linen thread, in what order it is not possible to determine as the backs of the pages are very closely bound. The first sewing, however, is made in the lower third of the page. Four linen cords are laced into the pasteboard cover and stabbed through the pages. There is no trace of a flyleaf having been pasted on the inside of the covers.

Both the date and design of this binding make it quite certain that it is the work of John Ratcliff.

2. MATHER, INCREASE: PRACTICAL TRUTHS . . .

Boston: Samuel Green, 1682.

An imperfect copy of this book, lacking the front cover and the title page, but including one page not listed by Evans, has the earmarks of Ratcliff's workmanship. This is especially interesting, as the two copies already described were bound by Ranger.

The calf binding, imperfectly squared, measures about $3\frac{5}{8}$ x $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The cover is decorated with a border of two narrow parallel solid lines, and inside this border another and smaller rectangle is formed by a similar band of lines, $\frac{7}{16}$ -inch from the outer set of lines on the sides, and $\frac{9}{16}$ -inch from them at the top and bottom. At the corners of the wide band between these two sets of lines are conventionalized fleurons of five buds, pointing outwards towards the corners of the book. The same design, pointing downward, occupies a place just above the center of the cover.

This design consists of a straight stem, with the following on each side; a side bud with a short stem, a long curved stem with a leaf and an upright bud, two scrolls. Between the scrolls, centered on the main stem, is a frontal conventionalized leaf. The whole design is capped with a bud, forming a point to the whole. Over all the design measures $\frac{3}{2}$ -inch in length, and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch at the point of greatest width.

The execution of the tooling is very poor. The border lines vary in intensity of impression, and also in length, and only one of the five fleurons has been perfectly impressed. While the design of the fleurons has not been before noted, both the date and the workmanship point to Ratcliff as the probable maker.

The covers are built-up pasteboard and held by three laced-in linen cords which are bound around the backs of the pages. The pages are sewed to this cord in three places in sets of two signatures.

3. (BOSTON, SYNOD OF-): A CONFESSON OF FAITH . . .

Boston: Printed by John Foster. 1680.

Two copies of this book, one in possession of the Connecticut Historical Society, and one in the private collection of Albert C. Bates, show the general marks of Ratcliff's binding.

The Historical Society copy has a well squared calf binding, $3\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The covers are decorated with a border of two thin parallel solid lines about $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch from the edges, and also with an additional pair of lines parallel to the back lines and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch from them. In the corners of the large rectangle and of the outer border, pointing inward, are fleurons such as those used on the binding of Mather's *Practical Truths* described in No. 2 above. The edges have also been decorated with a zigzag roll, lightly impressed.

Across the back are the same decorations of parallel lines, placed at the top and bottom and at three other places equidistant from each other.

The cover is of pasteboard into which two leather thongs are laced, and stabbed through the pages, which are sewed with linen thread in three places.

The tooling and the character of the work are so nearly like that of the copy of Mather's *Practical Truths* as to make it evident that they are both by the same person. The impressions are not deep, and in two cases the fleurons have been impressed inaccurately.

4. Mr. Bates' copy of the *Confession* is of the same size, but varies in width from $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches to $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The cover is of dark brown calfskin, decorated with a border of segments similar to the illustration of the *Call From Heaven* in A. A. S. Proceedings, vol. 38, p. 38. The four corners have the same fleuron as has the Historical Society copy, and the back is decorated with five horizontal lines of segments in approximately the same positions as are the lines on the C. H. S. copy. Likewise, the edges of the boards have been decorated with the same segment design as is used on the covers.

The lacing, sewing, and material of the covers are of the same type as on the Historical Society copy. The tooling is somewhat better as it is deeper, being in general appearance like that shown in the illustration on the *Call From Heaven*. However two of the fleurons have been restamped inaccurately, and the square segments of the line design are very irregular,

sometimes giving the appearance of almost a continuous solid line. It is by the inaccuracies of the workmanship that this binding may be attributed to Ratcliff, although it is at first glance similar to the binding of Willard's *Covenant Keeping* noted below, which is rather to be attributed to his successor.

5. WILLARD, SAMUEL: COVENANT KEEPING . . .

Boston, James Glen for Samuell Sewall, 1682.

This 16 mo. is bound in calf, decorated with a line border of small segments, and with a similar line $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch from the back and parallel to it, thus forming two panels, one $2\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$ inches and the other $\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$ inches, very similar to those on the copy of the *Confession of Faith* before described. The fleurons which are set in the corners of the large rectangle, and also at the outer corners of the smaller panel, are of the same design as the centerpiece shown in the illustration of the *Call From Heaven*, thus corroborating Mr. Holmes' conclusion that Ranger bought up Ratcliff's tools. In all cases the stems of these fleurons are set pointing outwards.

The back of this copy has been practically torn away, but it appears that the line of segments was carried across the back at least at the top and bottom. The cover is held by leather thongs laced into covers of built up paper, and stabbed through the volume in two places. The pages are sewed with linen thread in four places, making a very close binding.

While in many respects this binding is similar to that of Mr. Bates' copy of the *Confession of Faith*, it is of much finer workmanship. Both the lines and the fleurons are deeply impressed; nothing has been restamped, and the irregularities of the segments in the line design can be laid more to the stretching of the leather than to the worker. None of them are run together and all cut deeply into the skin. Moreover, the boards have had a flyleaf pasted on them, which has not occurred in any other of the bindings here listed, and the edges of the skin have been trimmed as was the case in only one of the other bindings.

Thus while there is no assurance of this binding being the work of Edmund Ranger, yet its superiority over the other examples and its late date make it most probable that it is his. Certainly it is the most beautifully and accurately executed of the five bindings here listed.

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