

SOME EARLY PRINTED BIBLES IN THE COLLECTION OF THE BIBLE SOCIETY IN NEW ZEALAND

The Bible Society in New Zealand has recently undertaken to deposit in the Library an important collection of Bibles and related works.* In its entirety the collection comprises manuscript and printed materials ranging from the twelfth to the twentieth century. To date, only works printed before 1801 have been transferred but already the wealth of the collection is evident. It follows closely on the bequest by Sir Arthur Howard of 50, mainly sixteenth-century, Bibles and prayer books, an exhibition of which was held in 1975. The presence of both collections will give welcome strength in an area in which the holdings of the Library were formerly modest.

This article is limited to a survey of the 166 items which have arrived in the Library. They form the core of a collection which is capable of sustaining serious research in a number of fields. Inevitably the principal emphasis falls on editions of the English Bible, but important texts in other languages are also represented, occasionally in notable editions. It is a collection in which the development of contemporary Biblical scholarship may be clearly traced.

Both the Old and the New Testament appear in the original languages. The Hebrew Old Testament is present in two editions, one printed by Christopher Plantin at Antwerp in 1584 and the other by Pierre de la Rouvière at Geneva in 1609. The text follows that of Plantin's Royal or Antwerp Polyglot Bible of 1568-72 which reprinted with minor modifications the text of the Complutensian Polyglot of Alcalá, printed from 1514 to 1517 and published probably in 1522. In each case an interlinear Latin translation, a revision of Santes Pagninus's version first published in 1528, is also provided.

The Greek New Testament is strongly represented by ten editions of which six are sixteenth-century, offering versions of four major editions, the Complutensian and those of Erasmus, Robert Estienne and Beza. The Complutensian appears in two editions issued with the Hebrew Old Testaments of 1584 and 1609 and in a third printed by Plantin at

* Under the Deed the Library accepts the custody of the Society's collection of early Bibles and related printed and manuscript materials, to be designated as "The Bible Society in New Zealand Collection", and agrees to maintain it under the same conditions as the Library's permanent collections. Ownership of the collection is to remain with the Bible Society. The conditions of use of the volumes will be those laid down in the Library's *Rules* for its own rare book collection. The Library has agreed to display the collection from time to time and is considering the publication of a catalogue.—*Editor*.