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# CHRIST CHURCH LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

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## The Salusbury Manuscripts: Notes on Provenance

MS 183 and MS 184 are two manuscripts which belonged to the Salusbury family. They contain heraldry, and poems in Welsh and English, dating from the turn of the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. Christ Church has no particular Welsh associations to explain why it should have been given two manuscripts largely in the Welsh language.

The Salusbury family of Denbighshire is celebrated in both codices. Members of that family were students at Oxford's Jesus College and one at Braesnose, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The two volumes arrived in Christ Church in the mid-eighteenth century but their donor is unrecorded and it may be that the Library did not quite know what to make of them.

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## A Scarlatti Operatic Masterpiece Revisited

Among the many rare and precious holdings of Christ Church Library, Oxford, is a manuscript of unusual importance in the history of music: Mus 989. It preserves a complete musical setting by composer Alessandro Scarlatti of the text of poet Matteo Noris' drama *Il Flavio Cuniberto*.

By many musicologists' reckoning, Scarlatti was the most important Italian opera composer of his time, and a complete score of one of his operas is therefore a document of uncommon significance. And although perhaps less well-known, Matteo Noris was a librettist of considerable importance. Historians of opera depend upon various kinds of primary sources to write the performance history of particular works in the repertory.

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Preparatory drawing by Henry Aldrich for Henry Maundrell's *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem* (Oxford: Sheldonian Theatre, 1703). Christ Church shelfmark: Arch. Inf. G.5.13. This is a volume illustrated under Aldrich's direction. The engraver is Michael Burghers. Exceptionally, two preparatory drawings by Aldrich have survived. This is one of them. In the later editions of the book published after Aldrich's death, further illustrations, from Jean Marot's *Architecture française* (Paris, 1727), were added under the supervision of Nicholas Hawksmoor.

## Welcome to the New College Librarian: In Conversation with Gabriel Sewell



Hilary term this academic year has started with the arrival of Gabriel Sewell. She is the new College Librarian. With the University in lockdown from the beginning of January 2021, we haven't yet met many times in person, but following daily email exchanges and several video meetings, it feels like we have known each other for a long time already. These are unprecedented times, and every aspect of what we do in a complex library setting such as this needs re-thinking. I take advantage of Gabriel's kindness and goodwill to ask her a few questions.

*Editor:* First impressions?

*Gabriel:* It's a real honour to have been appointed as College Librarian at Christ Church. The Library staff are truly dedicated and offer a terrific service to all our users. This service has continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and staff have developed new ways of working to continue to support all our users, whether they are in residence in Oxford or further afield.

*Editor:* What are your priorities in this context?

*Gabriel:* My priority is to make sure that the College Library continues to satisfy all the expectations of students, and that services to users are maintained and delivered.

*Editor:* Apart from the limitations due to the pandemic, could you single out other difficulties the Library faces at present?

*Gabriel:* Space is quite an issue, for collections, for staff, and for users, and I am keen to start looking into ways of addressing that.

*Editor:* Please, tell us a few things about yourself, as a librarian.

*Gabriel:* I am a librarian and not an academic, but I have a particular interest in the history of ecclesiastical libraries at the time of the English Reformation, and in provenance research. Christ Church has such outstanding collections in so many areas, and I hope to get involved in research in all of them. I would also like to find new ways of embedding the use of the special collections in teaching and research, to seek out and encourage new users of its collections, and to find new ways to engage people with the Library, its history and its collections.

*Editor:* If you were to single out an area in which the Library was particularly successful during the lockdown, which would you choose?

*Gabriel:* Our collections continue to be presented to the world via Digital Bodleian, an online portal giving free access to digitised material from across the collegiate university. Material can also be accessed via the Christ Church Digital Library pages on the college website. We now have 198 items available (plus 40 items in the process of migration on the Bodleian platform) – more than all of the other colleges put together – testament to the hard work of the Special Collections team, and to the amazing variety and quality of our collections. A recent milestone was reached with the completion of the digitisation of our Hebrew manuscripts. I will be seeking support to prioritise and expand this programme in new directions.

*Gabriel Sewell*

College Librarian, Christ Church

As College Librarian Gabriel is responsible for the management and development of the libraries which are at the heart of the college's academic life, including the College's outstanding special collections of manuscripts and rare books. Gabriel was Assistant Director of Library Services (Special Collections) at the University of St Andrews before moving to Christ Church. At St Andrews she had responsibility for the management and strategic direction of the University's Special Collections of manuscript, archive, photographic and rare books. She has also worked as Head of Collections at Durham Cathedral, where she had oversight of the library collections, dating from the 6th century, and museum objects. She also worked at Lambeth Palace Library, where she had particular responsibility for reader services and all aspects of work relating to the Library's printed book collections, which includes a 1455 Gutenberg Bible, the earliest book printed in Europe using movable type.

# A Scarlatti Operatic Masterpiece Revisited

*continued from page 1*

There may be reports of performances of operas in correspondence, or other similar kinds of contemporary documents. There may be records of payments from a benefactor, whether personal or institutional: the aristocratic patron who commissioned the composition of the opera or supported its performance; the opera house that mounted the performance.

For opera historians, one of the most important period sources is the libretto: the printed booklet of modest dimensions that presents the complete text of the opera as set to music by the composer. Libretti were printed for many performances, and their date and place of publication are often the most conclusive evidence we possess as to when and where a particular opera was performed.

Matteo Noris' text *Il Flavio Cuniberto* is unusual for the number of times it was set to music, over a time-span that is atypically long for its moment in operatic history: 24 years (1682 to 1706). It is unusual, too, in the number of different composers who set it to music: Giovanni Domenico Partenio; Domenico Gabrielli; Domenico Giusino; Luigi Mancini; Alessandro Scarlatti; and others whose identities are unknown to us. Finally, it is unusual in the number of venues where operas based on the text were performed: Venice, Modena, Livorno, Palermo, Naples, Rome, Florence, Genoa, Pratolino (outside Florence), and Lucca.

An immediate qualification: The theatrical practices of the time were such that the text of the libretto was by no means fixed. It could be drastically altered from one performance to another, which could reframe the essential dramaturgical design and textual content of the original. The justification for such radical alteration was the contemporary hunger for variety.

The libretto for the 1702 Pratolino performance<sup>1</sup> is a case in point. It makes reference to the earlier performances and adds the following rationale for the rewriting of the text:

"The libretto [for the performance] was born of the already-known Pen of the Signore Matteo Noris, who will have the forbearance to suffer the changes made to the arias here, which on no account were updated in order to improve them, which so delicately remained, but in order to achieve some sort of variety in an Opera that goes on-stage after having

already been seen to appear in the most famous Theatres".

The libretto for a particular performance can usually be judged to preserve the text performed on that occasion, as it was perhaps refashioned for that performance.

Whereas the history of the different settings of a particular libretto can often be rather fully reconstructed on the basis of the extant libretti that attest to the performances, we possess the musical settings corresponding to those performances much less often. When we are fortunate enough to possess both the libretto and the music for a particular performance, we can document with fair precision the exact version of the composition – text *and* music – that was performed in that place on that occasion.

It had been thought – now erroneously, it appears – that Christ Church Library music manuscript Mus 989 was for the 1702 performance at the Medici villa in Pratolino, where Ferdinando di Cosimo III de' Medici, Grand Prince of Tuscany, had had a small purpose-built theatre constructed. Ferdinando was a passionate devotee of opera, and, indeed, of music more generally.

There can be little question that Scarlatti indeed composed the 1702 setting of Noris' libretto, since a collection of arias<sup>2</sup> excerpted from the 1702 setting is entitled as follows and documents Scarlatti's involvement:

"Selection of arias from the Opera Entitled *il Flavio Cuniberto* Newly set to Music by the Signore Alessandro Scarlatti and performed in Pratolino on the order of the Most Serene Highness Ferdinando de' Medici[,] grand prince of Tuscany[,] in this year 1702".

There is a virtually verbatim correspondence between the texts of the arias as they appear in this collection and as printed in the 1702 libretto, from which I quoted above. And from other period evidence – correspondence, the recollections of contemporaries – we know that there was indeed a performance of an opera entitled *Il Flavio Cuniberto* in Pratolino in summer 1702 and that Scarlatti was actually in Florence at that time.

Christ Church Library Mus 989 similarly identifies Scarlatti as the composer of the music it contains, which is likewise a setting of a text entitled *Il Flavio Cuniberto*. Its title page reads: "*Il Flavio Cuniberto* Del Sig[no].<sup>r</sup> Ales[sandr].<sup>o</sup> Scarlatti."

<sup>1</sup> *FLAVIO CUNIBERTO DRAMA PER MUSICA RAPPRESENTATO NELLA VILLA DI PRATOLINO*. (IN FIRENZE, MDCCII. NELLA STAMPERIA DI SUA ALTEZZA REALE. Appresso Pietro Antonio Brignonci. Con Licenza de' Superiori).

<sup>2</sup> MS 3950, Bibliothek des Priesterseminars Germany, Münster [in Westphalia].





The title page of Christ Church Library Mus 989.

Given that Scarlatti is identified as composer in both the Christ Church manuscript and the collection of arias from the 1702 performance, which corresponds so closely to the 1702 libretto, one asks: What is the relationship between the text and music of the Christ Church manuscript and the text and music of the 1702 Pratolino performance?

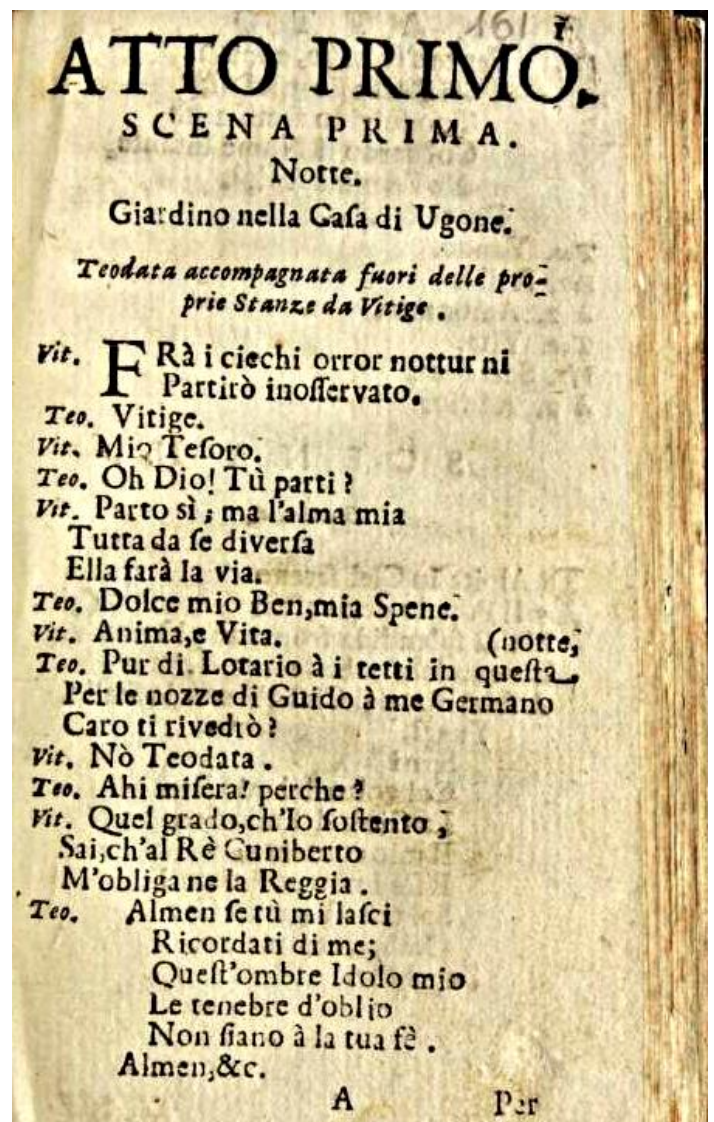
Using the time-honoured control mechanism favoured by the opera historian, one can compare the text of the opera as it appears in Christ Church Mus 989 against that in the various libretti. And contrary to the earlier understanding of the origins of the manuscript, the text it contains corresponds not at all closely to that of the 1702 libretto for Pratolino, but, rather, to that of the 1693 libretto for Naples,<sup>3</sup> and very closely to that libretto indeed.

The succession of events must have been something like the following: Scarlatti first composed his setting of Noris' text for a performance in Naples in 1693, a setting that Christ Church Mus 989 preserves; then, bowing to the contemporary passion for variety, Noris (and/or someone else) rewrote his text for Pratolino, and Scarlatti composed new and different music for it, from which only fragments remain, the collection of arias excerpted from the performance.

The importance of this new understanding is as follows. We now know that we are in possession of a complete primary source for an early performance of a setting of Noris' text, one composed by the leading Italian composer of Italian opera of the time.



The aria "Almen se tú mi lasci" in Christ Church Mus 989.



The aria text "Almen se tú mi lasci" in the 1693 Naples libretto.

<sup>3</sup> FLAVIO CUNIBERTO Drama per Musica Da rappresentarsi nel famoso Teatro di S. Bartolomeo Nell'ANNO 1693. CONSECRATO All'Eccellentiss. Sig. D. FRANCESCO BENAVIDES Conte di Santo Stefano, & Vicerè, e Capitan Generale in questo Regno. (IN NAPOLI: Per li socii Dom. Ant. Parrino, e Michele Luigi Mutio Con licenza de' Superiori, 1693)

And it is a document of a performance in Naples, one of the foremost centres of Italian operatic life in the late Seicento, a far more consequential centre than the rather more provincial private opera theatre at the Medici villa in Pratolino.



The Christ Church manuscript is thus an exceedingly important document of the opera's performance history.

For a composer of Scarlatti's stature, and especially as a composer of Italian opera, it is inevitably a matter of considerable interest when one can establish with greater certainty the credentials of a particular primary source.

A full-scale study of the codicological features of the manuscript at Christ Church ought now to be undertaken: gathering structure; watermarks, which can be conclusive evidence of the date and place of origin of a manuscript; etc. And some enterprising musicologist – perhaps a candidate for the Ph.D.? – should now prepare and publish a modern edition of this all-important source.

One marvels at how much important material remains to be reclaimed from the primary sources; and musicologists can take great comfort in the knowledge that fundamental scholarly work remains to be done and that the inexhaustible richness of the surviving primary material is such that the musicological enterprise will survive for as long as it is deemed to have value among those with a reverence for scholarship and a passion for scholarly discovery.

Anthony M. Cummings, M.F.A., Ph.D.  
Lafayette College

Dr Cummings is Professor of Music and Coordinator of Italian Studies at Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, USA. He is a specialist in European music of the early-modern period and in early jazz.

He teaches a course on European classical instrumental music, a survey of European music from c.1600 – c. 1915, and specialized courses on the history of Italian music and the history of opera.

He has published five books on Renaissance music and is the co-editor of an edition of the complete works of an important early New Orleans jazz musician. He is also the author of many articles in scholarly journals and papers delivered at international conferences.

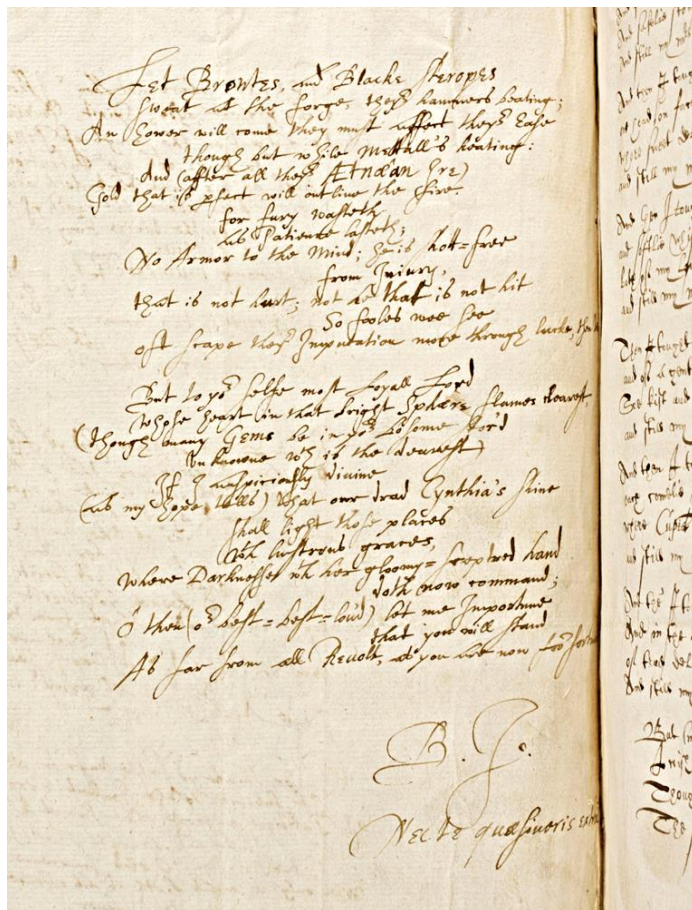
Prior to coming to Lafayette in 2006, Dr. Cummings was Lecturer in Music at Princeton University (1986-88); a resident of Florence, Italy, for several years as a fellowship recipient; and Associate Professor of Music (1992-2005) and Professor of Music (2005-2006) at Tulane University in New Orleans.

## The Salusbury Manuscripts: Notes on Provenance

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MS. 183 includes medical prescriptions, letters and poems in honour of John and Henry Salusbury in English, Welsh and Latin.

MS. 184 was conceived as a Welsh language manuscript mainly in praise of Catherine de Berain, and the Salusburies, but it also contains Elizabethan poetry in English. On folio 40, for instance, is Ben Jonson's autograph manuscript of 'An Ode to James, Earl of Desmond'.



Page containing Ben Jonson's autograph manuscript.  
MS 184, fol. 40v.

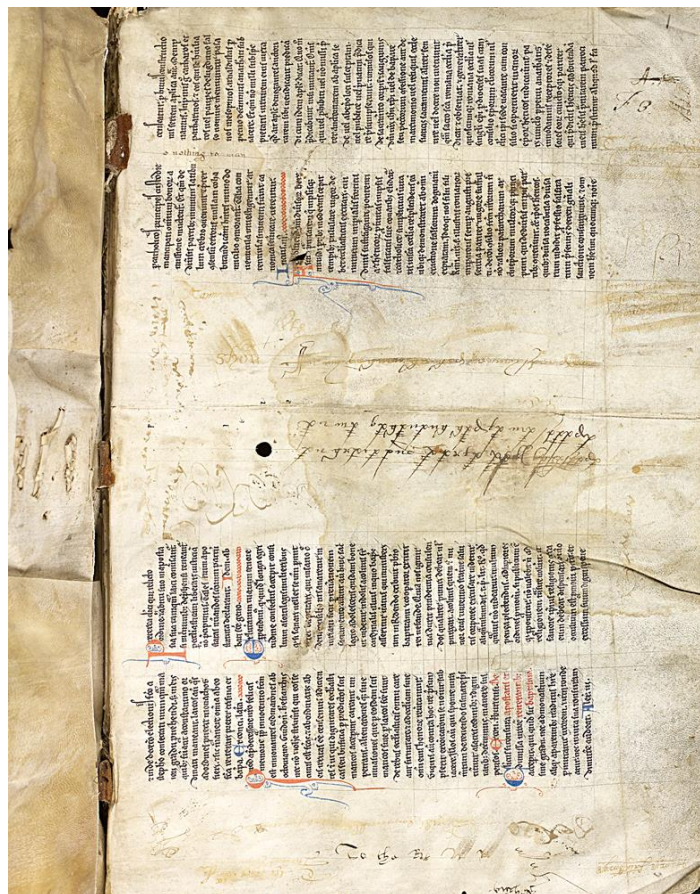
In his detailed description of the Ben Jonson poem Mark Bland assumes that MS.184 came to Christ Church Library as part of the Wake Bequest in 1737.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, no trace of either manuscript in Archbishop Wake's Library. And there is also no clear indication of the date when Christ Church may have acquired them.

The earliest record of MS 183 and MS 184 is in *Library Records* 15. The context for the production of this catalogue was the work required to house and

<sup>1</sup> Mark Bland, 'As far from all Reuolt: Sir John Salusbury, Christ Church MS 184 and Ben Jonson's first ode', *Seventeenth-century poetry, music and drama*, edited by Peter Beal in *English Manuscript Studies 1100 - 1700*, Vol. 8 (London: British Library, 2000), p. 40. [iii.2.8/8].



order the eclectic bequest of Dean Henry Aldrich (1648-1710). It was begun by Charles Brent in 1717. A significant part of this catalogue was not written by him personally and was not completed in his lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Extra items were added to the listing by Richard Hind between 1748 and 1754. Among these were the two Welsh manuscripts. The shelfmark for MS 183 here is 'A.10', and for MS 184 is 'E.19'. A word of caution though: the fact that the codices were first listed during Hind's librarianship does not mean that the books necessarily arrived during those years. They could have been in the library for years before they were added to the catalogue. They also could have been added to the listing at a later date.



Two successive old shelfmarks (A.10 and F.3) written on the top right corner of the flyleaf of MS 183.

The volumes appear again in the second item bound in *Library Records 15*. This is largely the work of one person, Edward Smallwell. Here, on folio 23, MS 183 is listed under the shelfmark 'F.3', as 'Medical Prescriptions; Letters, & Welch Poems in Praise of Sir John Salisburie', and MS 184, under shelfmark 'F.11', appears as 'Welch Poems to Sir John Salisburie'.

More about their arrival surfaces from the unexpected connection between the two Welsh manuscripts and the Christ Church copy of the first

edition of John Gerard's *Herball*.<sup>3</sup> Sadly, the latter lacks William Rogers's important title page,<sup>4</sup> but, importantly, reveals that it was John Salusbury's own copy. The volume is inscribed 'Sir John Salusbury his booke' and is heavily annotated in his handwriting. Almost every blank space in the margins is filled with notes, illustrating the manner in which Gerard's work encouraged the practice of recording plant localities and herbal remedies.<sup>5</sup> The same hand, namely that of John Salusbury, is also easily identifiable in many of the pages of the two aforementioned Welsh codices.

Checking the Salusburies in Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*<sup>6</sup> 1715 - 1886, Vol. IV (1888), we found that a John Piozzi Salusbury had matriculated at Christ Church on the 8th May 1811. Could he have possibly donated the volumes to his alma mater? And if not he, somebody connected to him in the Salusbury family?

The Salusbury family can trace its origins in the Vale of Clwyd back to the early 14th century. The first to be knighted was Thomas Salusbury (d. 1505) who fought for Henry VII at the Battle of Blackheath (1497). Thomas was succeeded by his son Sir Roger Salusbury (d. 1530). The latter's eldest son, John Salusbury, was made a Knight of the Carpet by Edward VI at his coronation in February 1547 and married Jane Myddleton of Chirk Castle. He was Sheriff of Denbighshire in 1542 and 1575 and Chamberlain of North Wales and Member of Parliament for Denbighshire between 1547 and 1555. He built the magnificent mansion at Lleweni making it the largest residence in North Wales. His sons were John and Roger, the latter settled at Bachygraig following his marriage to Sir Richard Clough's daughter.

John Salusbury married Katherine of Berain. She was the grand-daughter of Sir Roland de Velville, Constable of Beaumaris Castle and reputed natural son of Henry VII by an unknown Breton lady. They had two sons Thomas, born in 1561, and John, born in 1566. Unfortunately John the father died before John was born and the two boys were placed under the guardianship of the Earl of Leicester who had

<sup>3</sup> John Gerard [...], *The Herball, Or, Generall Historie of Plantes* (London: John Norton, 1597). Christ Church shelfmark e.3.4.

<sup>4</sup> Discussed in great detail by Mark Griffiths in "Shakespeare: Cracking the Code," *Country Life*, 20 May 2015.

<sup>5</sup> See R.T. Gunther and John Goodyer, *Early British Botanists and Their Gardens* (Oxford: Printed by F. Hall for the Author at the UP, 1922), pp. 238-245.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1715-1886: Their Parentage, Birthplace and Year of Birth, with a Record of Their Degrees: Being the Matriculation Register of the University*. Later Ser. ed. London: Oxford: Joseph Foster; Parker, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts to c. 1600, in Christ Church, Oxford*, ed. by Ralph Hanna and David Rundle (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 2017), p. 86.



received from Queen Elizabeth the Earldom and Lordship of Denbigh, together with extensive holdings in the county. However, twenty years later, Thomas was involved in the Babington plot to assassinate Elizabeth and put Mary on the throne. As a member of the Body to the Queen he was ideally placed to carry it out but before he could do so he was arrested and executed on Tower Hill on the 21st September 1586. In these circumstances his estate would normally have been forfeited to the Crown but because of the entailment under the Earl of Leicester's guardianship it passed to his brother John.

In order to improve the family's standing after his brother's misdemeanour, John married Ursula Stanley, the illegitimate but acknowledged daughter of Henry, 4th Earl of Derby. When John died in 1612, his eldest son Henry (1589 - 1632) inherited the estate which included his father's commonplace book (MS. 184). Henry married, Hester daughter of Sir Thomas Myddleton. From their son Thomas (1612 - 43), the estate passed to his son, also Thomas (1634 - 58), but he died unmarried. The estate was inherited by his brother John, who died in 1684 also without issue, and the estate passed to his sister Hester, wife of Sir Robert Cotton, 1st Bt. (1635 - 1712). Their son, Sir Thomas Cotton, 2nd Bt. (1672 - 1715) married Philadelphia Lynch.

Their son, Sir Robert Salusbury Cotton, 3rd Bt. (1695 - 1748) died without issue and the estate passed to his brother Sir Lynch Salusbury Cotton, 4th Bt. (1705 - 1775).

It was during this period that Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale visited Lleweni. In his diary for the 29th July 1774, Dr. Johnson wrote: "In the lawn of Lleweni is a spring of fine water which rises above the surface into a stone basin, from which it runs to waste in a continued stream through a pipe. There are very large trees ... The ground is beautifully embellished with woods, and diverse by inequalities. The Hall at Llewenni is 40 feet long and 28 feet broad. The Gallery 120 feet long; the Library 42 feet long and 28 broad. The dining parlour 30 feet long 26 broad." In a further note dated 17th August Dr. Johnson wrote: "Adieu, Llewenny! I do not often delight much with people or with place, but Llewenny is a place, and Mrs. Cotton a person, that I like extremely, and with whom I lived quite at my ease, and very much to my liking ..."

On Sir Lynch Salusbury Cotton's death in the following year, his son Sir Robert Salusbury Cotton, 5th Bt. (1739 - 1809), inherited the estate. Regrettably he sold it in 1780 to the Hon. Thomas Fitzmaurice, the brother of the future Prime Minister and tenant of Mrs. Thrale at Streatham Park, the 2nd Earl of Shelburne. Fitzmaurice lived there and at a cost of £20,000 set up a bleach works for the linen

woven on his Irish estate. After his death in 1793 the estate was sold and resold but following the bankruptcy of the new owner, Lord Kirkwall, the works were closed down. Later, in 1810, the estate was bought by Edward Hughes, the copper magnate from Anglesey, for £200,000. He dismantled the big house and took some of the material to build an extension to Kinmel Hall, near Abergele. What is left of Lleweni is now a farmhouse.

Before this upheaval the contents of Lleweni were dispersed, with Mrs. Piozzi, the former Mrs. Thrale of Dr. Johnson fame, and the last surviving member of Roger Salusbury of Bachygraig's descendants, having some of the books and paintings.



Hester Lynch Piozzi (née Salusbury, later Mrs. Thrale) by Marino or Mariano Bovi (Bova), published by John Stockdale, after Pierre Noel Violet. Stipple engraving printed in colours, published 1800.

Mrs. Piozzi's mother was Hester Maria, sister of Sir Robert Salusbury Cotton, 3rd Bt. (1695 - 1748). It is likely that she acquired MS 183 and MS 184 on his namesake's death in 1809. That year also saw the death of her second husband, Gabriel Mario Piozzi, who had been her daughters' music-master. He had built an Italianate villa, Brynbella, three miles north of Lleweni. The marriage had caused a rift between Mrs. Piozzi and her Thrale daughters which worsened when, having no male heir and determined to keep the Salusbury name alive, she adopted her second husband's Italian nephew and brought him to England calling him John Salusbury Piozzi. She sent him to boarding school under the Reverend Shephard at Enborne in Berkshire where he met Edward Pemberton who was to become his best friend and future brother-in-law. At Enborne John

Salusbury Piozzi was converted from Catholicism to Anglicanism and was prepared for the formality of British naturalisation. Mrs. Piozzi then petitioned Lord Liverpool at the Home Office on behalf of John "That the King will give him leave to ... enjoy the privileges of English birth, for the preservation of his property; and to entitle him to accept, receive, and enjoy whatever land or money may be given or bequeathed him."<sup>7</sup> Her petition was successful and on the 30th June 1809 John became a 'faithful liege subject' of the British crown. John continued his education at Enborne until Mrs. Piozzi, who had heard a lecture by Dean Jackson in London, decided 'there must be a little Christ Church first.'<sup>8</sup> She solicited letters of recommendation from many individuals. Among them was the Reverend Joseph Townsend who had been chaplain to the 2nd Earl of Shelburne and whose son, Henry, had matriculated at Christ Church on the 10th May 1797. However, Townsend was less than enthusiastic about recommending Christ Church, even writing to Mrs. Piozzi: "Oh now for pity do not put that fine pure-hearted boy to Christ Church; it is the wickedest College in Oxford - or any other College. Oh, any place but Christ Church, although my dear Doctor [Dean Charles Henry] Hall does purpose a restoration of that discipline and an encouragement of those good morals, which the late Dean [Cyril Jackson] wholly despaired of, and by so doing, helped drive them away."<sup>9</sup> Undeterred, Mrs. Piozzi was not to be dissuaded from having her adopted son educated at Christ Church.

It may have been during the negotiations for his admission that the Salusbury manuscripts came to Christ Church, not from John, but from his pushy adoptive mother whom he always called Aunt. Although Christ Church has never accepted gifts from parents wishing their offspring to be admitted, it is likely that Mrs. Piozzi ignored this rule and presented the manuscripts and an armful of printed books to Christ Church unconditionally. Dean Hall could not accept them officially, which may be the reason why there is no record of the gift, later passed on to the Library.

John was finally admitted on the 8th May 1811 but he was no scholar, hated the place and begged to be allowed to return home. Despite the humiliation to her pride, Mrs. Piozzi agreed and wrote: "You are the best of all wise Boys ... in wishing to leave Oxford."<sup>10</sup> Not even the arrival of Edward Pemberton, his best friend from school at Enborne, who matriculated at

Christ Church on the 29th January 1812, but who did not come into residence until the 18th April, could change his mind, and John left on the 29th May 1812.<sup>11</sup> Edward, another Gentleman Commoner, followed him on the 5th December 1813,<sup>12</sup> both without degrees. When Edward returned home to Condover Park in Shropshire, John went to stay with him and there fell in love with Edward's younger sister Harriet.

On the 9th September 1814 John reached the age of 21 and became Mrs. Piozzi's residuary legatee, taking possession of Brynbella in order to avoid legacy tax. John and Harriet were married on the 7th November 1814 and lived at Brynbella where John converted the library into a maid's room much to the annoyance of Mrs. Piozzi. After the wedding, Mrs. Piozzi returned to Bath and did not see Brynbella again until the christening of John and Harriet's second daughter who was born on the 27th July 1816. While there, Mrs. Piozzi became depressed. The weather was appalling, the hay ruined, her old family home, Bachygraig, was in a poor state and most of the Salusbury ancestral home of Lleweni had been demolished. She wrote in her diary: "No newspapers, no company: no books and no conversation."<sup>13</sup> Still depressed, she returned to the conviviality of Bath where she continued to enjoy the social life until her death on the 2nd May 1821 leaving all her property and effects to John. She was buried alongside her second husband in Tremeirchion Church in the Vale of Clwyd.

In 1843 Christ Church repaid Mrs. Piozzi's generosity by giving £50 towards the creation of a pauper lunatic asylum at Denbigh.<sup>14</sup> It also provided two of its graduates as successive Bishops of St. Asaph William Carey 1830 - 46 and Thomas Vowler Short 1846 - 70, who both worked hard to improve education in the diocese.<sup>15</sup>

### *John Wing* Christ Church

Mr. H.J.R. Wing was Assistant Librarian from 1962 to 1995. In this capacity he supported several research projects, not only by assisting in the compilation of material and answering specific queries, but also collating additional information provided by scholars and anonymous records alike. His knowledge of the Library is second to none. He has published extensively in *Christ Church Library Newsletter*.

<sup>7</sup> Notes 7-10 are from *The Piozzi Letters*, Electronic edition, Vol. 4: 1805 – 1810 and Vol. 5: 1811 – 1816 in which HLP is Hester Lynch Piozzi and JSPS is John Salusbury Piozzi Salusbury. See HLP to JSPS 6 May 1809.

<sup>8</sup> See HLP to Lady Williams 5 March 1810.

<sup>9</sup> See HLP to JSPS 22 February 1810.

<sup>10</sup> See HLP to JSPS 18 [-19] May 1812.

<sup>11</sup> Christ Church Archives x.c.306

<sup>12</sup> Christ Church Archives x.c.309

<sup>13</sup> *The Thrales of Streatham Park* by Mary Hyde (1977) p.301

<sup>14</sup> *The Cardinal's College* by Judith Curthoys (2012) p.64

<sup>15</sup> We are indebted to John Idris Jones of Ruthin for his help with the branches of the Salusbury family and their homes, and, as ever, to the staff past and present, of Christ Church Library and Archives.



## Peeled Onions, Papal Authority and Divine Kingship in the Allestree Library: The Neglected Manuscripts of Tristram Sugge

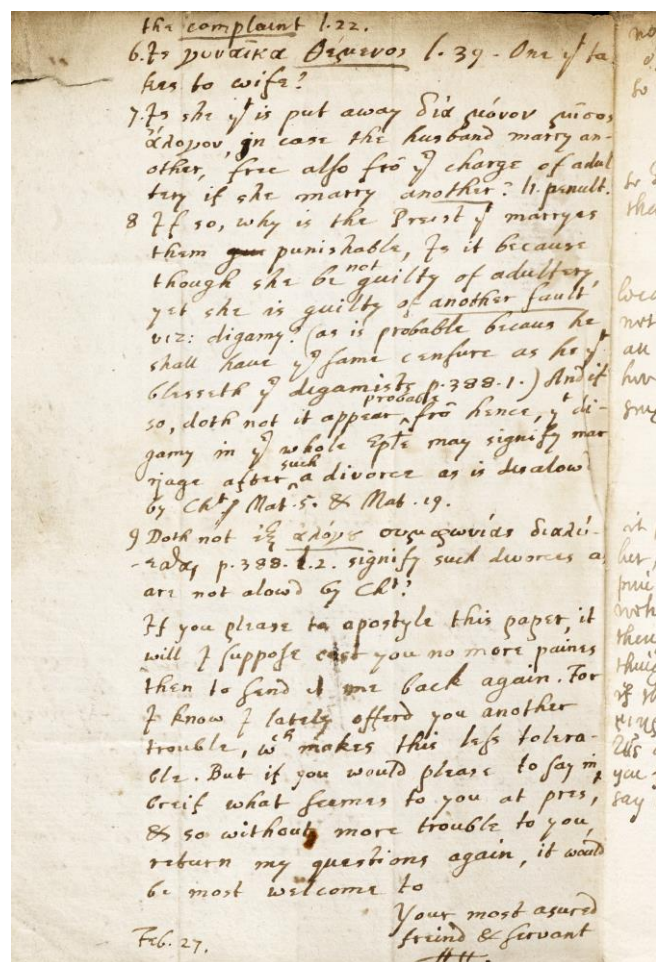
In 1969, the historian John W. Packer wrote of an interesting letter that he had found in the Allestree Library at Christ Church.<sup>1</sup> This small document is around three-hundred-and-fifty years old, and its beige paper still bears the creases along which it was once neatly folded, then to be addressed 'For Mr Thorndyke' and secured with a red wax seal.<sup>2</sup>



Page from the letter to Herbert Thorndike. The name of the addressee and the seal are visible. Christ Church Library, Allestree M.3.23a.

Old age has caused some of this seal to crumble away, but it is still clear that it displays the arms of John Hammond, a royal physician to James I and VI and Henry, Prince of Wales. Yet it was not John Hammond who folded, addressed and sealed this letter. Instead, it is the work of his son, Henry Hammond, the eminent and influential Royalist divine who was centre-stage in the intellectual battles against the Parliamentarians that raged during the 1640s and '50s – battles over Church government, the power and necessity (or not!) of kings, and so much else besides. This letter, then, is certainly interesting in its own right, simply for being from Hammond, the 'oracle of the High Church party', to Herbert Thorndike, a 'Laudian stalwart' in

Hammond's circle.<sup>3</sup> Yet this letter is not just interesting for its content, but also for its location in the Allestree Library, nestled amongst a series of apparently disparate folios. Forgivably, Packer suggested that these folios, written 'in another hand' to the letter, were 'perhaps Allestree's' – but we now know that he was wrong. In fact, the letter sits side-by-side with the writings of Mr. Tristram Sugge (1610-1661), a little-known fellow of Wadham who was expelled from the University by the Parliamentary Visitation in 1648. Sugge was to return to that college after the Restoration in 1660 but only to die in 1661, and none of his works, save some poems celebrating the birth of a royal daughter, made it into print.<sup>4</sup> Yet Sugge's manuscripts, and the fantastically controversial ideas contained within them, offer great insights into Royalist religion during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum. For Sugge was a Royalist who advocated both a more independent Church and a partial return to papal authority alongside his ardent defence of the king's power.



Last page from the letter to Herbert Thorndike. Christ Church Library, Allestree M.3.23a.

<sup>1</sup> J. Packer, *The Transformation of Anglicanism, 1643-1660* (Manchester, 1969), p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford, Christ Church Library Special Collections, M.3.23, Henry Hammond and Herbert Thorndike, Letter.

<sup>3</sup> R. Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement: The Influence of the Laudians, 1649-1662* (London, 1951), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> N. Tyacke, 'Religious Controversy', in N. Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford – Volume IV, Seventeenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford, 1997), p. 593.

That this letter might once have belonged to Sugge, rather than having been put with Sugge's papers by Richard Allestree, is not unlikely.

Sugge's writings show that he liaised with George Ashwell, a protégé of Hammond,<sup>5</sup> and it is probable that Sugge bequeathed his manuscripts to Allestree, himself a member of the 'Hammond circle'.<sup>6</sup> This makes Sugge all the more interesting, as he was not an isolated figure – rather, this was a man well-connected with the Hammond group, with divines that are household names to historians of the period.

Perhaps the most immediately interesting aspect of Sugge's thought is his controversial advocacy of what Tyacke has called a 'via media' return to papal authority,<sup>7</sup> despite Sugge identifying not as a Roman Catholic but as a member of the Church of England. At the least, therefore, Sugge supports Anthony Milton's argument that Royalist 'Anglican' religion was not as moderate, and in effect boring, as some historians continue to portray it – rather, it was loaded with 'radical potential' fuelled by the 'demands of changing contingencies' under Parliamentary rule.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Sugge offers much useful advice for dissolute individuals (read the Christ Church undergraduates of today), ranging from comments on library etiquette to reflections on college parties.

Considering the significant insights that Sugge's texts can offer us, it is all the more disappointing that Nicholas Tyacke is the only historian to have given Mr. Sugge any well-deserved airtime. This article hopes to change all this; what follows is a shameless advert for the Sugge collection, surveying the available material and arguing for its utility to historians and the interested alike. This is followed by an appendix that briefly summarises the nature and content of each manuscript. This information will, it is hoped, make it a little less arduous and time-consuming for scholars to use the Sugge collection in their own research.

If the manuscripts are so useful, why have these sources not been written about more? The primary reason for this is that their authorship was not known until Tyacke identified the manuscripts in 1986 – but this was also not a good time for a manuscript to come into the world. Over the last decades, historians have increasingly relied on printed material

which, through fantastic resources such as Early English Books Online, is readily available, often making it more attractive than trapesing to an archive to handle manuscripts – as Dr Alex Middleton put it to me a little over a year ago, 'printed sources have taken over the game'. Yet manuscript sources, as works not necessarily to be published, have their own vital charms, and this is reason enough for greater study of Sugge's work. For one, the 'private' nature of some of Sugge's notebooks allows them to have their 'unusual frankness' about controversial topics that Tyacke has rightly celebrated.<sup>9</sup>

## The Manuscripts

It is probable that many of these manuscripts, if not all of them, were unbound when they came into the possession of Richard Allestree, instead being disparate folios and scraps of notes<sup>10</sup> – the type of thing a man leaves behind when he dies unexpectedly, as it appears Sugge did on the 27 January, 1661. However, almost all of the material is now properly bound, and three of the manuscripts are inscribed "In usum Reg. Prof. Theol. Oxon. Dono Dedit Ricardus Allestree S.T.P.R. Jan. 18. 1680", like many other texts in the Allestree collection.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, we can see that the manuscripts were bound after Sugge penned them, and thus perhaps first bound by Allestree, because much of the writing runs (sometimes to the point of being obscured) into the binding itself, such as in M.3.1 and M.3.8.

This is noteworthy because it means that some of the manuscripts, if collated by someone other than the author, may not be in the order in which Sugge would have put them – instead, they may be in an order that Allestree or another collator deemed sensible. This is not the case for all of the manuscripts, as many of the works (most apparently M.3.1, M.3.8, M.3.10, M.3.11 and M.3.13) are collated in such a logical order that they were almost undoubtedly intended as such by Sugge himself. The other texts, however, may well be random leaves and quires from Sugge's notes that were retrospectively compiled and bound together by someone other than the author.

The varying collation is only one example of the wide-ranging qualities of the Sugge collection, in which a plethora of different subjects are presented in many different formats. Regarding the 'formats' of the texts, perhaps the most important distinction for the historian is that some of Sugge's works appear to have been intended for the printing press, or at least for circulation as manuscripts, whereas others (which generally contain the most frank discussions of

<sup>5</sup> Tyacke, 'Religious Controversy', p. 595, and J. Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven and London, 1991), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Tyacke, 'Religious Controversy', p. 593, and Boshier, *Making of the Restoration Settlement*, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Tyacke, 'Religious Controversy', p. 594.

<sup>8</sup> A. Milton, 'Anglicanism and Royalism in the 1640s', in J. Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War – Conflicts and Contexts, 1640-49* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Tyacke, 'Religious Controversy', p. 593.

<sup>10</sup> M.3.23 may give us an insight into how Sugge's writings were originally arranged – see appendix.

<sup>11</sup> These are M.3.6, M.3.7 and M.3.8.



controversial matters) are scrappier and without the flow and order of a treatise – these manuscripts are more akin to ‘private’ notebooks. Even within these categories there is a good range of structures and genres. Sugge’s works intended for public consumption, for instance, include a catechism in dialogue form.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, regarding the topics covered in the collection, Sugge presents in-depth opinions on matters ranging from soteriology to second baptisms and usury,<sup>13</sup> to name but a few, meaning that the collection offers valuable insights for both general scholars of the period and for those investigating a specific aspect of religious debates in the 1640s and ‘50s.

## Pithy and Accessible

Scholars will also find that, with a little foreknowledge, Sugge’s manuscripts are not too difficult to navigate, making his often intriguing viewpoints quick to unearth. M.3.6, for instance, despite being a notebook with no particular order or structure, has a partially complete contents page, as does M.3.15. The manuscripts M.3.8, M.3.10 and M.3.21 are similarly simple to navigate, as detailed in the appendix.

Furthermore, Sugge’s writing is littered with pithy and creative prose, the inclusion of which makes a history engaging and entertaining. Of course, even the dullest sources can be worthy of the historian’s investigation – but it must be acknowledged that, as a humanity, historical writing should appeal to a wider audience. As Trevor-Roper put it, histories should be accessible to ‘lay people’, not only to a narrow ‘professional’ audience – and a readable history is certain to attract more ‘lay’ readers.<sup>14</sup> My favourite example of Sugge’s prose is contained in some of his comments on schism, about which Sugge was deeply moved. Perhaps inspired by an onion soup from the kitchens of Wadham, Sugge writes of Christians that: ‘wee separate & separate, till wee all are separated one from another; even as in ye peeling of an Onion, wee may peelee & peelee, till all be brought to nothing; unlesse it be to a few teares, with wch ye eyes of all good men must needs run over to see it don.’<sup>15</sup>

Many of Sugge’s quotes would also, if known, be of great assistance to the Christ Church undergraduates of today. When sat in the library, for

instance, many members of the House (and probably me included) could benefit from Sugge’s observation that ‘God gave man one tongue & two eares, that he might heare more & speake lesse’.<sup>16</sup> I am sure that if he was alive today, Sugge would also have many things to say about those library-users who type too loudly on their computer keyboards, or who breathe too heavily when they have their headphones on. Furthermore, Sugge could also have been preemptively penning life-changing advice for those undergraduates climbing the greasy pole in the Oxford Union (despite its foundation over 150 years after his death): ‘Ambition or vain glorie is proverbially styled in french chemise de l’ame, ye smock of ye soul: it being ye last of her vicious habits that shee casteth off’.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps this invaluable knowledge should be pinned onto the Union noticeboard.

In short, the Sugge collection in the Allestree Library is unforgivably underused. Its texts are varied in form and authorial intent, relatively easy to navigate, and can offer both broad and focused insights into the intellectual tumults of the Civil Wars and Interregnum. Furthermore, on top of all this, the relevance of Sugge’s comments has endured up to the present, being directly applicable to the life of a Houseman today. Perhaps at their next college party or ‘BOP’, the JCR and GCR might consider Sugge’s perspective on such events: ‘unchast looks, idle talk, & wanton songs, what are they but a kind of contemplative fornication’?<sup>18</sup>

## Appendix

Manuscripts for Publishing or Circulation:

**M.3.1** – ‘A Scholastique Catechisme, Wherein ye Mysteries of Christianity are unfolded by way of Dialogue’

*Content:* discussion mainly of patriarchal kingship, authority, ecclesiology, the Law of Moses and the Sabbath. There are two incomplete draft treatises near the end of the manuscript.

*Languages:* mostly in English with some Latin.

*Notes:* This has been digitised and can be accessed at: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/35d9ece0-d2b5-44c5-94eb-2f14dd1c6c4c>

This manuscript is discussed more deeply in my article: Hawke, J., ‘The Scholastique Catechisme of Tristram Sugge: Reconciling Ecclesiastical and Monarchical Authority During the English Civil Wars’, *The Seventeenth Century*, (2020) DOI: 10.1080/0268117X.2020.1814398\

<sup>12</sup> M.3.1. This MS has been digitised and is available online – see Appendix.

<sup>13</sup> Tyacke, ‘Religious Controversy’, p. 594, M.3.6, fo. 36r, and M.3.15, fol. 127r.

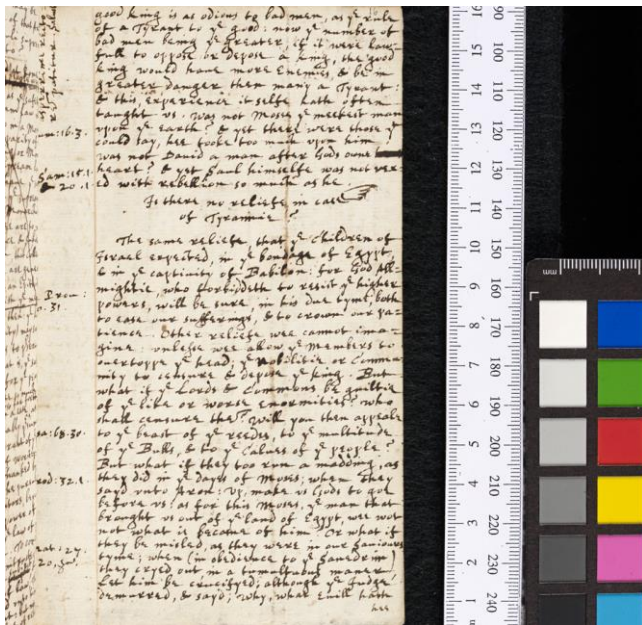
<sup>14</sup> H. Trevor-Roper, ‘History: professional and lay’, in H. Lloyd-Jones, V. Pearl and B. Worden (eds), *History & imagination: essays in honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper* (London, 1981), pp. 1-14.

<sup>15</sup> M.3.6, fol. 98r.

<sup>16</sup> M.3.12, fol. 172v.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 131v.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 104v.



Digitised sample page from MS Allestree M.3.1.

### M.3.10 – ‘Flores Theologia’

*Content:* covers a series of topics arranged in alphabetical order from ‘Afflictio’ to ‘Zelus’. Near the end of the manuscript are written a number of prayers for different occasions and entities.

*Languages:* a mixture of English and Latin.

*Notes:* This manuscript includes a title page.

### M.3.11 – ‘Tractat 5’

*Content:* 5 chapters which are presented comparatively neatly, the first entitled ‘Evangelii secundus Mattharum’: ‘The Gospel of Matthew’.

*Languages:* almost entirely in Greek and Latin, little or no English.

*Notes:* There is no obvious title page to this manuscript, but its neatness and structure suggest it was for circulation.

### M.3.13 – ‘Tractat 3’

*Content:* a neatly presented treatise on charity, the title page of which declares ‘In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas’: ‘unity in fundamentals, liberty in matters doubtful, and charity in everything’.<sup>19</sup>

*Languages:* mostly in Latin, little or no English.

*Notes:* Tyacke has noted that a shorter draft version of this treatise appears in M.3.15, fols. 126-8.

‘Private’ Notebooks:

### M.3.6 - ‘6 Collectanea Theologica’

*Content:* a plethora of issues are engaged with, ranging from miracles, to marriage, to religious ceremony and soteriology. This notebook contains many of Sugge’s controversial statements about papal authority (see, for instance, fols. 144-145r). Much of this notebook contains extracts from other

authors.

*Languages:* Latin, Greek, English and French.

*Notes:* There is a partially complete contents page at the end of the manuscript. This is one of the few MS of the Sugge collection that is signed, inscribed ‘T.S.D.T/SCW’.

### M.3.12 – ‘Adversaria’ (meaning ‘memoranda’ or ‘notebook’)

*Content:* a similarly diverse range of issues is discussed as in M.3.6, although many topics in this manuscript are on aspects of human nature, such as ‘Ambitio’, ‘Libido’, ‘Humilitas’ and ‘Garrulitas’. Other topics include duels.

*Languages:* mostly written in Latin at first, then increasingly in English.

I have not studied the following manuscripts in enough detail to pronounce with confidence whether they were to be circulated:

### M.3.7 – ‘Collectanea Theologica’

*Content:* a range of topics is discussed, including Scripture, tradition, reason, and authority, such as on the ‘right of calling a Synod or Council’ and who ‘ought to be called & to vote therein’ (fol. 12r). What might be an epitaph for Arminius is written near the end of the manuscript.

*Languages:* mostly English and Latin.

*Notes:* It is uncertain whether this was to be published or circulated. The section on synods and councils does not mention the pope’s right to call councils (as detailed in M.3.6), which may be because Sugge had not yet developed these views or because this manuscript was written for wider consumption. Some of the prose would suggest that it was to be circulated as Sugge asks ‘my reader to consider’ certain matters (fol. 22r). However, much of the manuscript is not written in this style and there is no title page.

### M.3.8 – ‘Analecta ad loca Scripturae difficiliae’

*Content:* this manuscript contains commentary on different verses of Scripture, arranged by biblical book e.g. Genesis, Exodus etc.. Each book of the Bible has its own page, although twenty-four books are without any commentary. There is an introduction entitled ‘Biblia sacra’.

*Languages:* mostly English with some Latin and Greek.

### M.3.15 – ‘Tractat 4’

*Content:* a range of topics is discussed, such as usury and original sin. This is a comparatively neat manuscript of the collection.

*Languages:* mostly Latin, Greek and English.

*Notes:* There is a form of contents at the end of the manuscript. Additionally, fols. 126-8 contain a draft version of the treatise on charity contained in M.3.13.

<sup>19</sup> Tyacke, ‘Religious Controversy’, p. 595.



### M.3.21 – ‘De Sacramentis’

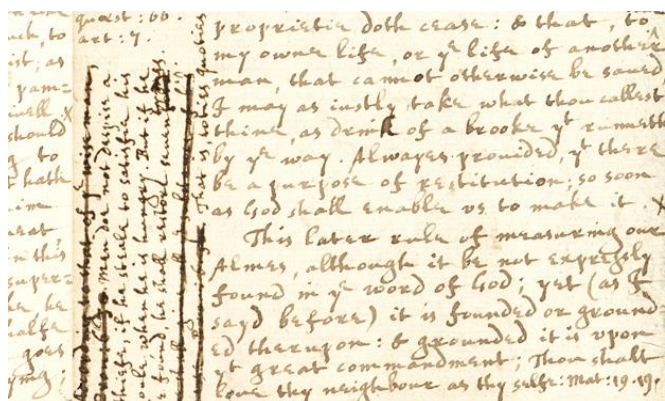
**Content:** this text covers different Sacraments, such as baptism, with a lot about the eucharist.

**Languages:** Latin and Greek.

**Notes:** This manuscript has quite a few footnotes/references and other aspects that suggest it might be for publishing or circulation, but my grasp of Latin and Greek is insufficient to determine whether Sugge intended to circulate or publish this text.

### M.3.23

**Content:** this is a box which contains three separate items. The first is a faded list (not in Sugge’s hand), which surrounds a letter from Henry Hammond to Herbert Thorndike. This letter concerns various questions that Hammond had about marriage and divorce, with reference to a publication of the epistles of Photius of Constantinople (possibly referencing a publication of 1651). Thorndike has returned the letter, as Hammond asked, with his answers written next to Hammond’s questions.



Page with corrections from MS Allestree M.3.23, fol.11.

The final item of M.3.23 is an unbound group of sixteen folios (in Sugge’s hand) concerning charity.

**Languages:** English.

**Notes:** M.3.23 might give us an insight into how Sugge’s works were arranged before they were given to Allestree, by whom many of which were probably bound. For instance, Sugge’s folios concerning charity start mid-sentence, suggesting that they were part of a larger work that has been lost, or that Allestree (or a later collator) was not sure which other works these folios should have been bound with. Some of Sugge’s other works, which we now think of as individual manuscripts, may have originally been separate groups of folios like this.

John Hawke

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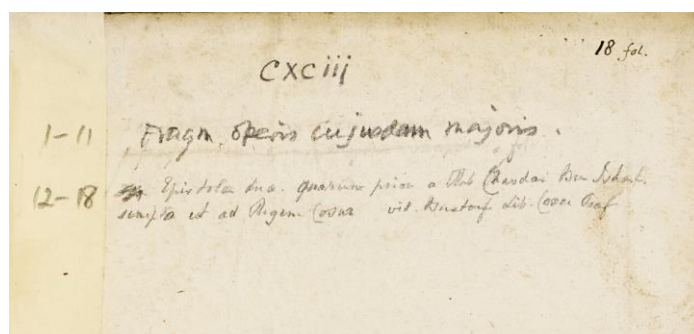
## Two Unrelated Texts - MS 193

### “Speech is Dumb” and the Khazar Correspondence

MS 193 is one of the most intriguing and problematic items in the Hebrew collection at Christ Church. The two faint inscriptions on the inside of the front cover, each in a different hand, read:

1–11 *Fragm. Operis Cujusdam Majoris* (A fragment of a larger work).

12–18 *Epistolae duae quarum prior a Rab Chasdai Ben Ishah Scripta est ad Regem Cosar vid Buxtorf Lib. Cosar Praef* (Two letters, the first of which was written by Rav Chasdai ben Isaac to the Khazar King: see Buxtorf’s *Liber Cosar*<sup>1</sup>).



There is also a barely discernible deleted line of writing between the two inscriptions; the folio numbers, 1–11 and 12–18, appear to be more recent additions, as does the pencilled annotation, ‘18 fol’, in the top right-hand corner.

The two manuscripts are little more than fragments: eleven and seven folios, respectively, and have nothing in common except that they both date from the late 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century: they were probably only bound into a single codex for convenience at some later date. The first manuscript (fols.1r to 11v) is an allegory, in a style akin to a Renaissance morality play, on the Culpability of Speech for the evils it uniquely facilitates, and what should or can be done about this. The second (fols.12r to 18r) contains copies of the letters purportedly exchanged by Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut,<sup>2</sup> one of the most eminent Jews in 10<sup>th</sup> century Spain, and a King of the Khazars (Cosars) whose predecessors, together with many of their subjects, had reportedly embraced Judaism.

Sadly, there is a serious problem regarding the integrity of MS 193. According to the original entry in Kitchin’s catalogue<sup>3</sup> (Fig. MS 193.1), it should

<sup>1</sup> A Latin translation entitled *Liber Cosri* of Judah Halevi’s theological treatise *Kitab al Khazari* (ספר הכוזרי) published by Johannes Buxtorf the Younger in 1660.

<sup>2</sup> Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut (915–970), scholar, physician, diplomat, and patron of science, was the first Jew to hold a senior public office under the Arab caliphs in Spain.

<sup>3</sup> G.W. Kitchin, *Catalogus Codicum Mss. Qui In Bibliotheca Aedis Christi Apud Oxonienses Adservantur* (Oxford, 1867).

comprise 42 folios and not its present 18. Furthermore, the exchange of letters between Ḥasdai and the King, which now occupies fols.12 to 18, should begin on fol.35 from where it presumably continued up to fol.42. Taking Kitchin's entry at face value, it would appear that when he prepared the catalogue, the codex contained a further twenty four folios (19 to 42), now apparently lost. The deleted line in the inscription may possibly have referred to these missing folios.

CXCIII.		
Codex chartaceus, in quarto, ff. 42.		fol.
1. Fragmentum operis ejusdam majoris .	1.	
2. Epistolæ duæ, quarum prior a R. Chasdai Ben Ishah scripta est ad Regem Cosar	35.	
(Vide Buxtorfium, Lib. Cosar. Præf.)		

Fig. MS 193.1.

The illustration shows the original entry for MS 193 in Kitchin's catalogue, according to which it comprised 42 folios in all and the correspondence between Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut and the King of the Khazars began on folio 35. This is, however, no longer correct.

There are, unfortunately, still some errors even in the amended entry in the Library's copy of Kitchin's catalogue (Fig. MS 193.2).

CXCIII.		
Codex chartaceus, in quarto, ff. 42.		fol.
f. 12-18 1. Fragmentum operis ejusdam majoris .	1.	
f. 1-11 2. Epistolæ duæ, quarum prior a R. Chasdai Ben Ishah scripta est ad Regem Cosar	35.	
(Vide Buxtorfium, Lib. Cosar. Præf.)		

Fig. MS 193.2.

The entry for MS 193 in the Library's own annotated copy of Kitchin's catalogue. The two pencilled addenda to the left are in the wrong order: the "Fragment of a Larger Work" is in fact still the first item in the codex (fols.1-11), and the Khazar correspondence the second (fols.12-18), i.e., the order they were in originally.

### The First Manuscript (fols.1r-11v): An Allegory on the Culpability of Speech for the Evils it Facilitates, or "Speech is Dumb"

An old Hebrew foliation in the top margin of the recto pages of the manuscript runs from פד (84) to צד (94), indicating that what we have now are just the last 11 of what had once been 94 folios. The script is semi-

cursive Sephardi and the text begins mid-sentence on the top line of fol.1r; there is no indication of what might have preceded it. It ends on fol.11v with the signature of Joshua di Viana,<sup>4</sup> followed by the Hebrew phrase תם ונשלם (finished and completed) and an enigmatic six line verse postscript involving a riddle.<sup>5</sup>

The watermarks in this manuscript are partials of the widespread medieval hand/glove category, in this instance with four fingers closed, thumb open and a six petal flower or star extending from the tip of the middle finger (Fig. MS 193.3).<sup>6</sup>

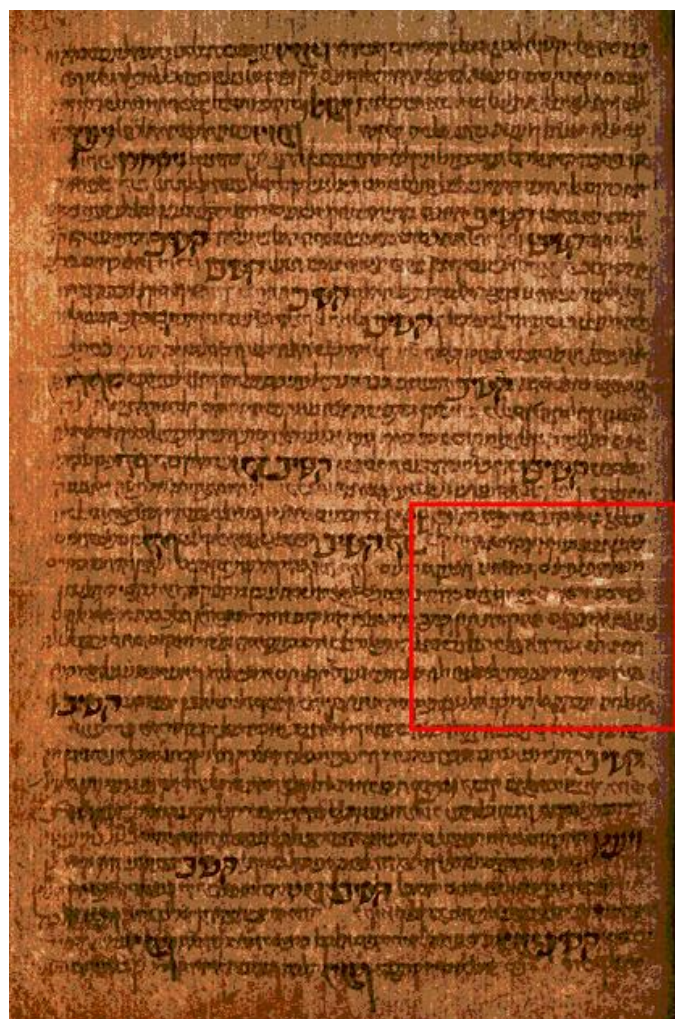


Fig. MS 193.3. fol. 7r.

<sup>4</sup> Most probably the town of Viana in the Kingdom of Navarre that only came under the Spanish crown in 1512.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the fragmentation of Hebrew manuscripts see:

בנימין ריצלר, כתובי-יד עבריים שנתפצלו, אסופות; ספר שנה למדעי היהדות א (תשמז) קה-קנח.

<sup>6</sup> Some one hundred and fifty different categories of watermarks that were in use prior to 1600 have been identified and catalogued. Of these, only eight are representations of human figures or parts of the human body, and of the latter, only the hand (or glove) is found in any great frequency. Horodisch A., 'The Aesthetics of Old Watermarks', *The Briquet Album* (Hilversum: The Paper Publications Society, 1952), p.107.



Treated as a play, the work comprises three Acts. The *dramatis personae* are a King, a Yemenite sage, the king's wise men and Justice. The first Act (fols.1r–5v) opens with a lengthy discourse given by the King, in which he presents an exhaustive catalogue of the many evils that Speech (לשון) facilitates. The four principal headings are:

1. Uttering a Vain Oath (שבועת שווא). It is written in the *Torah*, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold guiltless whosoever takes His name in vain."<sup>7</sup>

2. Calumny (מלשיות). An informer (מלשין) is one who puts his fellow's body or property in the hands of gentiles or reveals to them matters concerning Israelites.

3. Gossip (רכילות). It is written in the *Torah*, "Do not go tale-bearing among your people; nor stand idly by the blood of your neighbour."<sup>8</sup>

4. Slander (דבות). Whoever besmirches a person's name (המוציא שם רע) and slanders his fellow, denigrating him with the intention of disgracing him, is most despicable and subversive in the eyes of God.

The King goes on to list other evils that Speech facilitates and by which a person may sin: Lying (כזב), Flattery (חנופה), Scorn (ליצנות), Profanity (נבלות), Perjury (עדות שקר) and Cursing One's Father and Mother (המקלל אביו ואמו). These evils are not, however, as grave as those covered by the four principal categories, "for a person does not always fail in them" (אין אדם נכשל בהם תמיד).

After the King had finished listing these blemishes of Speech (מומי הלשון) and pointing out all the abominations it engenders, the countless casualties it has resulted in – confounding men, women and children, even destroying entire towns and cities – that all the people cried out and wept...and they tried to bite off their tongues with their teeth. This greatly distressed the King for it was not right or proper; the [people's] pain was clearly beyond bearing.

The King's subjects were so chastened and shocked by his admonition that they resolved to forswear speech altogether and began to bite off their tongues. But the pain that this caused them distressed the King still more; it was clearly too much. There had to be a better way of dealing with the evils that Speech (לשון) engenders than biting off their tongues (לשון).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 20:7.

<sup>8</sup> Leviticus 19:16.

<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew word, לשון, can mean speech or tongue.

Act Two (fols.5v–7v) opens with the solution the King proposes for putting an end to these evils. Instead of them cutting off their tongues, he decrees that Speech should be paraded before the townspeople, in a hat and tunic that proclaimed its ignominy, and then be put to death.<sup>10</sup> Whereupon, a Yemenite sage (חכם תימני) steps up and hands him the following letter from Justice (צדק):

"O great and illustrious King; I am Justice, your devotee...I departed from you just three days ago and I am sending you this letter with one of my trusted lads who will speak on my behalf. Please listen to him, for if you do, I will yet return to you; but if you refuse to...I will never see you again and this is farewell."

The King is taken aback. Justice had always been a friend and source of strength to him, so why had it now threatened to desert him? The Yemenite sage explains:

"I have been sent regarding the sentence handed down on Speech. Thus says Justice: This sentence is darkness and a deathly shadow; it is unconscionable and will anger all beings above and below...Speech is not to blame for these evils for it is just an articulation of the mind; it only intones what the mind forces it to say and, like a slave, has no choice in the matter; it is *Anuss* (אנוס - the Hebrew term for compelled or constrained)...and God will forgive it."<sup>11</sup>

Mortified by this rebuke, the King turns angrily on his wise men:

"Can you refute what the Yemenite has said? What can the King and his advisers say when the sentence they handed down on Speech is overruled? Those who would judge have themselves been judged. It is shameful that the eyes of the court were so blind as not to see the difference between compulsion and free-will."

The wise men do not, however, relent and they put forward two counter arguments. First, that the Yemenite sage is lying about being sent by Justice:

"You are not an agent of Justice; it never sent you. Except for his own self-esteem, this Yemenite has no brain in his head!"

<sup>10</sup> The detailed description of the parade through the streets of the town – the tunic embroidered with the victim's alleged sins, the degrading cap and the crier who leads the procession – is reminiscent of an Auto-da-fé.

<sup>11</sup> In Jewish law, no blame attaches to a person who is forced to sin against his will. This general principle is derived from the Torah ruling that no guilt attaches to innocent victims of rape (*Deuteronomy* 22:25-27).

Second and more to the point, that Speech itself had never claimed it was under duress when uttering these evils.

Ignoring the personal abuse, the Yemenite sage rejects the notion that Speech's silence denotes consent. Scripture, he replies, has instructed us: "Open your mouth and speak up for the dumb."<sup>12</sup> Speech cannot speak for itself; it is as though dumb. Furthermore, a victim's silence may be the result of shock or trauma and someone else should speak up for him or her.

In the fierce debate that ensues, both the Yemenite sage and the wise men cite Talmudic precedents which they each claim support their particular position. However, it all ends inconclusively with the wise men still insisting that the sentence of death be carried out on Speech. Unsure what to do next, the King writes a personal letter to Justice:

"I have heeded the voice of the Yemenite you sent and have not carried out the death sentence on Speech. However, the wise men and leaders of my kingdom disagree with the Yemenite and have put forward several counter arguments. If I have found favour in your eyes, please come and guide us as to how we should act."

Justice accepts the King's invitation and at the opening of Act Three (fols.7v–11v) we find it seated next to him as the court reconvenes on the morrow. What follows is a colloquium or academic seminar, with Justice in the role of professor, on the legal aspects of the arguments presented by the wise men and the Yemenite sage on the previous day.

Justice is not impressed by either side's submissions:

"What I see here is just sophistry (פלפולים): a jumble of knowledge (בקיאות) and reasoning (סברא). But just as perceiving the light requires both illumination and clear vision...so there are two qualities that all honest judges and adjudicators (שופטי צדק ויושבי על מדין) must possess: (i) the acumen (שיקול הדעת) to make correct logical deductions and (ii) a thorough knowledge of the Law as expounded in the Mishna and Talmud."

Moving on to the matter at hand, he notes that the wise men and the Yemenite sage had both agreed that if Speech was indeed forced to utter the evils it articulates, no blame would attach to it; this is an instance of the general rule derived by logical reasoning (סברא) that an *Anuss* is blameless. But this begs the question of what constitutes compulsion such that it would excuse an otherwise forbidden act. For example, what if a person resists at first but later consents; or if a person falsely authenticates a bill of sale under the threat that, should he refuse, his

house will be burnt down; and are vows taken under duress subsequently binding? To rely on reasoning alone in deciding such fraught and diverse issues, as had both the wise men and the Yemenite scholar, is too simplistic. They must be adjudicated by reference to the Law.

"But," the wise men ask, "if the Law is what really matters in the end, why did you say that judges need the ability to make proper logical deductions too? Isn't it superfluous?"

"Not at all", replies Justice. "It is needed to differentiate one case from another and one law from another. For without discretion (שיקול דעת), there is neither knowledge nor understanding,"

The second point of law raised in the debate was the Yemenite's contention that even if Speech had not claimed it was under duress, the Scriptural injunction, "Open your mouth and speak up for the dumb," should be invoked. Namely, that it is a court's duty to speak up on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. The wise men ask how far judges should go in applying this principle. Should it be accorded to all litigants and in all instances? For are not all litigants, to some extent, "dumb" when it comes to pleading their cause before the court? And if so, how will the actual truth of the matter come to light if the Judges themselves become involved in the submissions? As the Talmud warns, "Be careful in your choice of words, lest they learn to lie from them."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, no matter how judiciously judges apply this principle, how can they avoid being suspected of having taken a bribe from one side or the other, or even from both?

These are genuine concerns and their complexity defies a simple answer. Turning first to Heaven, Justice calls upon God's celestial beings to watch over and guide those who are charged with administration of the Law.

"Peace, a fullness of peace, to the most renowned Rabbis and Sages, the earthly bearers of God's mace (נושאי כלי ה')...May the multitude of God's angels (מלכין), worshipful attendants (פלחין) and holy messengers (עיריין קדישין) protect you...and rise to your assistance..."

More down to earth, he counsels these same Rabbis and Sages, in the strongest terms, to shun the taking of any contingent payment (מלקבל תנאי) from the community in which they live. For the receipt of such conditioned payments may impugn them and bring them into disrepute: they may be thought willing to accept bribes. Any remuneration they receive should be in the form of an honorarium and in a fixed amount agreed between them and the community; and it should only suffice to cover their legitimate

<sup>12</sup> Proverbs 31:8

<sup>13</sup> Mishna Avot 1:9.



living expenses. Above all, they must protect their independence and maintain a respectful distance from the community at all times and not be 'yes-men', as the King's wise men had been.<sup>14</sup> As the Talmud states: "If a scholar is loved by the townspeople, it is not by virtue of his pre-eminence but because he does not rebuke them for neglecting Heavenly matters" (*TB Kethubot* 105b).<sup>15</sup>

The six line enigmatic verse postscript or riddle below the signature of Joshua di Viana on fol.11v (Fig. MS 193.4) may not be by him but is an interpolation added by the copyist. It reads (in translation):

"I have contemplated the law of *Hametz*<sup>16</sup> and *Matzah*<sup>17</sup> / And the one has no measure over the other but this:  
That in *Hametz* there is a drop of ink, like a mustard seed, / And from *Matzah* it is totally lacking and absent.  
And from here there is a hint  
to the prohibition of *Hametz* in any amount."

The prohibition on consuming *Hametz* on the Passover festival is absolute; even an infinitesimal amount is forbidden.<sup>18</sup>

The analogy to Justice's caution to the Rabbis and Sages would appear to be that they, likewise, should shun any contingent payment – any 'leavening' (*Hametz*) – no matter how small.

But what is the measure, the 'drop of ink' no larger than a mustard seed, that distinguishes *Hametz* from *Matzah* and which hints at the prohibition against consuming even the minutest amount of *Hametz* on the Passover festival?

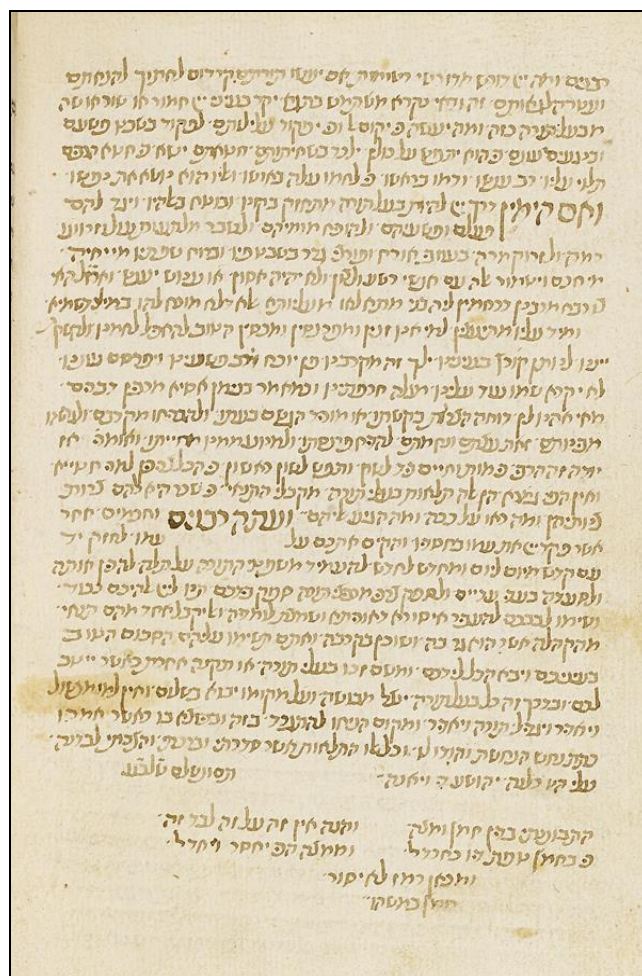


Fig. MS 193.4. fol.11v.

The illustration above showcases the verse postscript or riddle below the signature of Joshua di Viana:

התבוננתי בדיו חמץ ומצה ומנה אין זה על זה לבד זה  
כי בחמץ טפת דיו כחדל וממזה הכי יחסר ויחדל  
ומכאן רמז לאיסור חמץ במשהו

The Hebrew words, *Hametz* (חמץ) and *Matzah* (מצה), both contain the letters מ (*Mem*) and צ (*Tsadi*); in the word *Hametz*, the *Tsadi* is in the form צ that it takes when it is the final letter of a word. The third letter in the word *Hametz* is a ה (*Het*) and that in *Matzah* is a ה (*Heh*). The only difference between these two Hebrew letters, and hence between the two words, is the gap in the 'left leg' of the letter ה (*Het*) in the word *מצה* (*Matzah*). A gap so small, that a drop of ink, a 'measure' no larger than a mustard seed, would suffice to close it and convert the letter ה (*Het*) in the word *מצה* (*Matzah*) into the letter ה (*Het*) in the word *חמץ* (*Hametz*).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> In the Introduction to his 16<sup>th</sup> century commentary, *Kol Yehudah*, on Judah HaLevi's *Kuzari* (ספר הכוזרי), Judah Moscato notes the importance that a drop of ink can have

<sup>14</sup> Justice's reply opens with a reworking of phrases from the first chapter of the *Book of Daniel* which recount how Daniel and his companions resisted orders from the King that would have required them to transgress their dietary laws.

<sup>15</sup> A manuscript at the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, USA, (CIN314: IMHM Film No. F 18265) contains a copy of the reply given by Justice to the wise men's final request for guidance. It too is signed by Joshua di Viana but makes no mention of Justice or of the events and exchanges that preceded it in MS 193. The heading simply reads: "A text written and sealed with the [signed] ring of a wise and understanding man, which informs all the practitioners of religious law of the blights, blemishes and impairments of any scholar who is known to accept a payment from the community, for it is great, and his sin is onerous in the community and congregation." A letter in the same batch of manuscripts is addressed to one "Joseph Ora of Viana in the Kingdom of Navarre..."

<sup>16</sup> Any food product made from wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt, or their derivatives, which has leavened (risen).

<sup>17</sup> The unleavened bread traditionally eaten by Jews during the Passover festival, during which the consumption of *Hametz* is forbidden.

<sup>18</sup> The metaphor of a mustard seed as the measure sufficient to incur a prohibition is found in the Talmud but in a very different context (*TB Berachot* 31a): "The daughters of Israel have undertaken to be so strict with themselves that if they see a drop of [menstrual] blood (דם) no bigger than a mustard seed, they wait seven [clean] days afterwards [before engaging in sexual intercourse]."

## The Second Manuscript (fols.12r-18v) The Khazar Correspondence: the Letters exchanged by Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut and the King of the Khazars.

The historical truth of the adoption of Judaism by the Khazars, an Asian people who once occupied the area of Eastern Ukraine, has been the subject of much scepticism ever since it was first reported over a thousand years ago. However, the discovery among the Hebrew manuscripts in the Cairo Genizah of (i) an original document written by Khazarian Jews residing in Kiev during the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (the Kievan Letter<sup>20</sup>); (ii) a diplomatic letter from an unnamed Khazarian Jew (the Shechter Text<sup>21</sup>) that describes their military exploits, the geography of their land and the manner of their acceptance of Judaism and (iii) fragments of Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut's diplomatic correspondence containing references to the Khazars,<sup>22</sup> has finally "put to rest...the widely promulgated belief...that the already known Hebrew sources describing the Judaization of the Khazars were mere forgeries or an unbelievable romance."<sup>23</sup>

This is not to say that there are no discrepancies between these Hebrew sources, the reconciling of which has provided much grist to the academic mill. Conversely, they have also been seized upon by those who have claimed that these same sources are forgeries and, furthermore, that any evidence produced to support their authenticity has also been faked.<sup>24</sup> Evidently, the notion that a people may once have freely chosen Judaism over Christianity or Islam, is a notion some find difficult to accept. But our concern here will be only with the provenance of the letters in the Christ Church MS 193.

The best known of the medieval Hebrew sources is Judah Halevi's theological treatise *Kitab al Khazari* (ספר הכוזרי) completed in 1140 and subtitled "*Book of Refutation and Proof on Behalf of the Despised Religion*." It was composed during the period of the Crusades, when Christianity and Islam, both of whom claimed to have superseded Judaism, were fighting each other for possession of Jerusalem,

in the context of the accuracy required of copyists when transcribing texts: "For a drop of ink out of place can change the entire meaning of a passage."

<sup>20</sup> Cambridge T-S (Glass) 12.122; a.k.a the "Kievan Letter."

<sup>21</sup> T-S Misc. 35.38; a.k.a the "Cambridge Document."

<sup>22</sup> Golb & Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 75-95.

<sup>23</sup> Golb & Pritsak, *Op. cit.* p.xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Constantine Zuckerman, 'On the Date of the Khazar's Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor: A Study of the Anonymous Khazar Letter from the Genizah of Cairo', *Revue des Études Byzantines* 53. 1995, p. 237-270.

Israel's ancient capital, and the Land of Israel. The Crusaders had captured Jerusalem, slaughtered its Jewish population and made it the capital of their Kingdom; meanwhile, the remaining Jews scattered across the Moslem *Ummah* remained *dhimmis*, a conquered and powerless people.

Reports of the adoption of Judaism by the Kings and people of Khazar were current and widely believed at the time.<sup>25</sup> Credence was given to this by the reported existence of letters that had been exchanged by Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut, one of the most eminent Spanish Jews of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and a King of the Khazars named Joseph, a direct descendant of the king who had originally adopted Judaism some two or three hundred years earlier.<sup>26</sup>

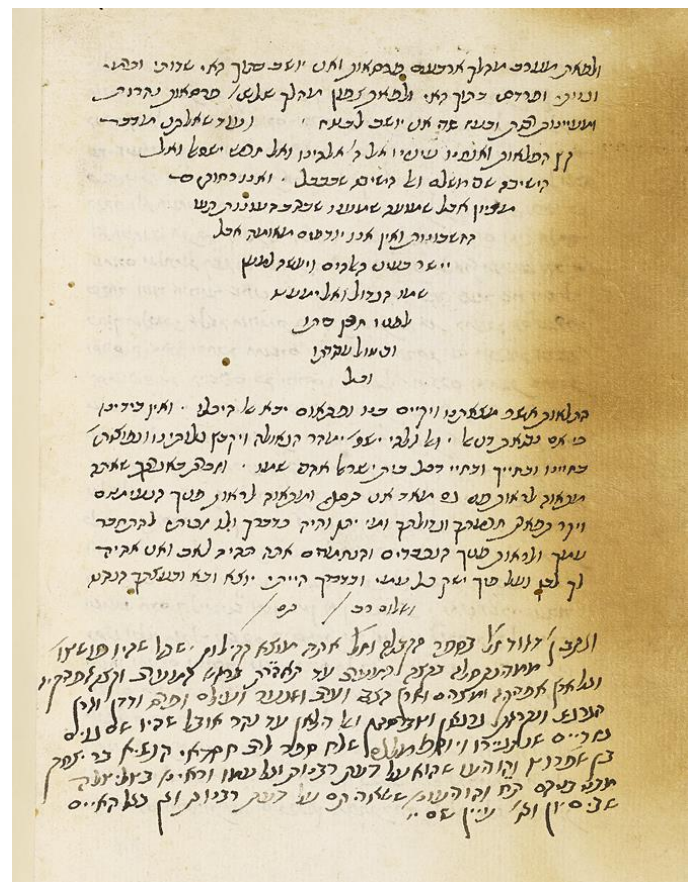


Fig. MS 193.5. fol 18v

The illustration above is the final page of the King's reply in the Christ Church manuscript. The extract from ibn Daud's chronicle appears as an appendix in a different script.

<sup>25</sup> There is an Arabic account of the event written by the 11<sup>th</sup> century Andalusian geographer and historian, al-Bakri: see Dunlop D.M., *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Schocken Books (New York: 1967), p.90.

<sup>26</sup> There are also a number of medieval Arabic, Karaite and Christian references to the Khazar's adoption of Judaism: see Dunlop D.M., *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Schocken Books (New York: 1967), pp.89- 115; Landau M., 'The Present State of the Khazar Problem', *Zion*, Vol. (January 1943), pp. 94-106 (in Hebrew).



The existence of this Hebrew (Khazar) correspondence is cited, though not without some reservations, in two medieval Hebrew texts: (i) the legal treatise *Sefer Halittim* by the 12th century R. Judah ben Barzilai of Barcelona<sup>27</sup> and (ii) the chronicle *Sefer HaKabbalah* by Abraham ibn Daud.<sup>28</sup> The passage in ibn Daud's chronicle has been added at the foot of the last page of the Christ Church MS 193 (fol.18v), but in a different Sephardi script from that of the correspondence (Fig.MS 193.5).<sup>29</sup>

Another 400 years would pass before the appearance of what would be presented as being copies of the actual letters exchanged by Ḥasdai and Joseph, the Khazar king. They first appeared in a Hebrew miscellany compiled and published in Constantinople in 1577 by Isaac Akrish, under the heading קול מבשר (*Kol Mevasser – A Voice Heralding Good Tidings*).<sup>30</sup>

An avid bibliophile, Akrish was born in Salonika in 1530, where his family had finally settled following the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and its overseas possessions in 1492. Despite being lame in both legs, he led the life of a wanderer for many years, collecting books and manuscripts as he went. Arriving in Cairo, he found employment as the tutor of the grandchildren of R. David ben Zimra (Radbaz), the *Ḥaḥam Bashi* or Chief Rabbi of Egypt, spending much of his earnings on hiring scribes to copy manuscripts for him.<sup>31</sup>

Akrish left Cairo for Constantinople in 1553, stopping off on the way in Crete, then still a Venetian territory. It was the year of Pope Julius III's edict that all copies of the Talmud be burnt, and the local authorities accordingly confiscated his books and manuscripts threatening to destroy them. Summoning up the courage to challenge the local governor, Akrish regained his collection and brought it with him to Constantinople, where he came under

the patronage of the leading court Jew, Don Joseph Nasi and the wealthy widow Esther Kira.<sup>32</sup>

Some eighty years after the publication of *Kol Mevasser*, the Christian Hebraist Johannes Buxtorf the Younger received a copy of the book from a friend. Although he regarded the letters it contained with suspicion, as would many of the scholars who came after him, he decided, to include them in the Preface to the Latin translation of Judah Halevi's *Kitab al Khazari*, entitled *Liber Cosri*, that he published in 1660.<sup>33</sup>

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In the preface to *Kol Mevasser*, Akrish relates that despite the many stories he had heard about the existence of a sovereign Jewish nation somewhere on earth, like most of his contemporaries, he could not believe them to be true.

"Throughout my life, I have heard people talk about the lost Tribes, saying that there are places where Israelite kings rule, lacking naught but the Temple Service and Prophecy...And that they wage wars and have conquered and subjugated other nations...But, like many others, I found this hard to believe...for all the stories and mariners' tales are just fabrications made up to strengthen the down-trodden and give them hope..."

It all seemed too far fetched; a Jewish fantasy. Only after personally hearing accounts of the existence of autonomous Jewish kingdoms in Ethiopia and in the mountains north of India, "from the mouths of disinterested non-Jews (מסיח לפי תומו)" that he met on his travels, did he begin to consider there may be some truth to the stories.

He gives four reasons why he ultimately came to believe in the existence of these Jewish kingdoms, even down to his own times, and why he decided to publish the Khazar Correspondence.

The first was a letter that an old friend, a rabbi and physician to the Turkish Governor of Egypt, had shown him. It was from the Abyssinian prince Doshdomor and had been given to his friend the physician by the Governor on one of his routine visits. The letter was a request for urgent military assistance from the Turkish authorities, "...for were it not for an officer of the Jews who helped me in the war with twelve thousand horsemen, I would myself have been in danger and might have lost all my forces."

<sup>27</sup> "We have seen...the copy of a letter which King Joseph...wrote to R. Ḥasdai. We do not know if the letter is genuine and if the Khazars are *gerim* (proselytes)...there may be falsehoods in it or people may have added to it..." Dunlop D.M., *Op. cit.* p. 132

<sup>28</sup> "You will find congregations of Israel spread abroad...as far as Daylam and the river Itil where live the Khazar peoples who became *gerim*. (proselytes). Their king Joseph sent a letter to R. Ḥasdai..." Dunlop D.M., *Op. cit.* p. 127. For a full English translation of the passages from *Sefer Halittim* and *Sefer HaKabbalah* see: Dunlop D.M., *Op. cit.* pp. 132 & 127, respectively.

<sup>29</sup> For an English translation of the King's reply by Brian Deutsch see:

[www.chch.ox.ac.uk/library-and-archives/hebrew-manuscripts](http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/library-and-archives/hebrew-manuscripts).

<sup>30</sup> National Library of Israel, System No. 003687769; Bodleian Opp. 8° 1098.

<sup>31</sup> For a short biography of Akrish and an account of his literary activities see: Abraham Yaari, *Studies in Hebrew Booklore* (מחקרי ספר), Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem (1958), p.235ff: in Hebrew.

<sup>32</sup> Except for a small remnant that was saved by the efforts of his wife, the entire collection he had amassed was destroyed in the great fire of Istanbul in 1569: Yaari, *Op. cit.* p. 244.

<sup>33</sup> Judah Ha-Levi, *Liber Cosri*, Gregg International Publishers Ltd. (1971).

The second involved another Abyssinian official, this time unnamed, who was passing through Egypt on his way to Constantinople and who invited every Jew he met to join him on a visit to "the kingdom of the Jews," assuring them that he would guide them "in peace and tranquillity, on the wings of eagles, for their border is near to mine" adding that he himself had been there many times.

Thirdly, the Governor of Ottoman Egypt and conqueror of Yemen, Sinan Pasha,<sup>34</sup> and his general staff, boasted that had their treasury not been emptied by the high cost of their otherwise successful campaign in Yemen, they would have continued on to the Jewish kingdom that lay just beyond and to its great fortified cities.<sup>35</sup>

And finally, it was seeing a letter that had been sent to the Khazar king and his reply to it.

"When I heard these words and saw a letter that was sent to the king of the Khazars and his reply, I decided to print them "with an iron pen and lead" (*Job* 19:24) to strengthen [the people] in order that they might truly believe that the Jews have a kingdom and dominion."

Akrish's interest was not in the Khazars as such (he was neither an anthropologist nor an historian), but in what they and their kingdom meant for Jewish hopes and aspirations of a renewal of their ancient sovereignty and it is in this context that the letters he published in *Kol Mevasser* should be viewed.

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The existence of the handwritten copy of the letters exchanged by Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut and the King of the Khazars in the Christ Church MS 193, appears to have gone unnoticed prior to the publication of Kitchin's catalogue in 1867. Buxtorf's 1660 edition of *Kol Mevasser* had become the generally accepted version of the correspondence and scholarly interest was concentrated on the historical truth or otherwise of the Khazars and their purported adoption of Judaism, not on the letters themselves.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> He becoming known as Fātiḥ-i Yemen (Victor of Yemen) and was later appointed vizir of the Sultan Murad III.

<sup>35</sup> This "Jewish kingdom" may have been the Falasha people who lived in the area around Lake Tana, in northern Ethiopia. Calling themselves "House of Israel" (*Beta Israel*). They practice a form of biblical Judaism and claim descent from Menilek I, traditionally the son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. In recent years the vast majority have moved to and been settled in the State of Israel.

<sup>36</sup> Apparently unaware of Ḥasdai's historical actuality, Buxtorf dismissed the reference to the correspondence in ibn Daud's chronicle as no more than an interpolation.

Written in a Sephardi semi-cursive script, the salient fact regarding the Christ Church text is that it is to all intents identical to that of *Kol Mevasser*, a congruence that cannot be just coincidence.<sup>37</sup> Both are 16<sup>th</sup> century documents and allowing for the few scribal errors in the manuscript, most of which are corrected in the marginalia, either could be the source of the other.<sup>38</sup> Alternatively, they may both be Akrish's own creations.<sup>39</sup>

Ḥasdai's letter to the Khazar king is prefaced in both the Christ Church text and *Kol Mevasser* by a verse colophon, the initial letters of whose first twenty five lines form an acrostic of his Hebrew patronymic: אֲנִי חֲסַדַּי בֶּרֶךְ יִצְחָק בֶּרֶךְ עֶזְרָא שְׁפָרֻט (I am Ḥasdai bar Issac bar Ezra Shaprut); the relevant letters are indicated in the handwritten copy by superscript dots.<sup>40</sup> In the letter itself, which is couched in a diplomatic style (fols.12r-15v), Ḥasdai inquires about the kingdom's geography and the people's way of life and religious practices. The King's reply is to the point and answers most of Ḥasdai's questions.

Akrish's *Kol Mevasser* and the Christ Church codex contain the only known version of Ḥasdai's letter; it has no provenance other than Akrish's account of how it and the King's reply came into his hands. There exists, however, a slightly longer rendering of the King's reply.<sup>41</sup> It was first identified some three

<sup>37</sup> The corrections in the three marginalia in the Christ Church manuscript are incorporated into the text of Akrish's printed version.

<sup>38</sup> Dunlop, who personally examined the Christ Church manuscript, remarks that "this manuscript presents a remarkably close similarity to the printed text" (*Op. cit.* p.130). In a letter dated August 1st 1942, now attached to an inside cover of MS 193, Dunlop thanks the Christ Church Librarian, Mr. Hiscock, for making the manuscript available to him.

<sup>39</sup> The only difference is that the passage from ibn Daud's chronicle that refers to the exchange of letters which has been added *verbatim* on the last page of the Christ Church codex (fol.18v) in a different Sephardi script from that of the body of the text, does not appear in the printed version in *Kol Mevasser*. It may well be a later addition (Fig.MS 193.5).

<sup>40</sup> It has been conjectured that the first letters of the last ten lines of the preface are an acrostic of the name of his secretary, Menahem ben Saruk. However, the first letters of four of these lines in the sixteenth century *Kol Mevasser*/Christ Church text do not fit the name. By contrast, Saruk's acronym can be discerned in the last lines of a single page manuscript in the Second Firkowitsch Collection, EVR II A 2661, Russian National Library, St. Petersburg (IMHM Film No. F 67694), which purports to contain the original version of the preface. The authenticity of this manuscript is, however, not universally accepted; four or five lines appear to have been judiciously altered to produce Saruk's acronym. The manuscript is almost certainly a nineteenth century fabrication. See: Hillel Hankin, *Yehuda Halevi*, Nextbook Schocken (New York: 2010). p.318ff.

<sup>41</sup> Approximately 1850 words as compared to the ~1550 in the *Kol Mevasser*/Christ Church version.



hundred years later by the Russian-Jewish historian and orientalist, Abraham Harkavy (1835-1919), among the manuscripts in the Second Firkowitsch Collection.<sup>42</sup> It is not a self-contained document but the last of the six texts in a nondescript manuscript (pages 45 – 52), the first five of which are short midrashic homilies. The six texts are all in the same 'eastern' Hebrew script, presumably the work of the same copyist, and follow on from one another in an unbroken sequence. The King's reply starts on the fourth line of p.45, following on immediately from the last line of the fifth text. It has nothing in common with the five midrashic texts and its inclusion in the same manuscript is anomalous. In 1882, some twenty years after the manuscript first came to light, it was dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, an estimate that is perhaps now due for reassessment.<sup>43</sup>

The two versions of the King's reply tell basically the same story but each does so in a different style of Hebrew: classical in *Kol Mevasser* and a more prosaic mode in the Firkowitsch manuscript.<sup>44</sup> This difference could, on the face of it, point to two distinct versions and sources but Harkavy insisted that the longer version he had found in the Firkowitsch collection was the principal and true one:

"If we compare the [longer] version of the letter in our manuscript with that published by Isaac Akrish in *Kol Mevasser*, every intelligent person will clearly see, that our version is the principal and true one and that Akrish's was shortened and changed by copyists."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Meassef Niddahim* No. 8, p.117 (הוצאת "קדם", ירושלים, (מאסף נדחים תש"ל); Russian National Library, St. Petersburg, EVR II A 157 (fols.45 to 52); IMHM Film No. F 10280. There is a transcript of the text in the same issue of *Meassef Niddahim*.

<sup>43</sup> The manuscript came to light following Firkowitsch's second tour of the Middle East in search of ancient manuscripts in 1863 and was dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century by D. Chwolson in 1882.

<sup>44</sup> In the *Kol Mevasser*/Christ Church version the past tense is expressed 37 times by the classical Hebrew construction of the *Waw* conversive with the Imperfect and 50 times by the Perfect and simple *Waw*. By contrast, the classical construction occurs just once, in the Firkowitsch version, the remaining 95 instances all being simple Perfect. The classical construction also predominates in the Schechter (Cambridge) Text: Dunlop, *Op. cit.* pp.151-153, 163.

<sup>45</sup> *Meassef Niddahim* (מאסף נדחים) No. 10, p.147. Harkavy had received a copy of the Christ Church manuscript from Alfred Neubauer and made much of the minor differences between its text and that of *Kol Mevasser* in his arguments in favour of the Firkowitsch manuscript. His insistence on the primacy of the latter manuscript is ironic as he himself would later refute many of Firkowitsch's theories, question the authenticity of many of his other discoveries and even accuse him of having forged some of them. In a recent (1999) palaeographic survey of the Firkowitsch manuscript, several previously unpublished erasures whose rationale is difficult to comprehend, have come to

Harkavy claimed that the version of the King's letter in *Kol Mevasser* "bears unmistakable traces of having been worked over and altered from the Long Version."<sup>46</sup> By whom, where, when and for what purpose this was done he does not say. His principal concern seems to have been to establish the primacy of the longer Firkowitsch manuscript over that of the *Kol Mevasser*/Christ Church version, as well as that of his own findings. But what of Ḥasdai's letter to the King, of which there is no trace in any Firkowitsch manuscript,<sup>47</sup> and without which the correspondence is incomplete?

A second significant difference between the *Kol Mevasser*/Christ Church and Firkowitsch versions of the King's reply is how they end (Fig.MS 193.5). Taking his cue from the eschatological vision at the end of the *Book of Daniel*, Ḥasdai had asked the King whether his people have any tradition about "when these portents will cease...and when our Exile...and powerlessness will come to an end."<sup>48</sup> The King's answer in the *Kol Mevasser*/Christ Church reads (in translation):

"And as for us, our eyes are to the Lord our God, and to the sages of Israel, and to the *Yeshivot* (Rabbinical Seminaries) in Jerusalem and Babylon and we are a long way from Zion, though we have heard that they erred in most of the answers [to this question] and we know nothing...But the destruction of His Sanctuary, the cessation of its Service and the troubles we endure, cannot be a small matter to Him...and we have only the prophecies of Daniel... And God, the God of Israel, will surely hasten the Redemption and gather up our scattered exiles in our lifetime...and in the lifetime of the whole House of Israel..."

This is followed by some flattering remarks about the "brilliance of Ḥasdai's wisdom" and the hope that they may some day meet when "you will be a father to me and I a son to you...and by your word shall I come and go and with your rightful advice. Shalom."

This entire passage is, however, missing from the Firkowitsch manuscript which ends in mid-sentence on the last line of p.52 with the words "As for us, our eyes are to..." (...אנחנו עינינו אל...); there is no p.53.

The absence of this passage from the Firkowitsch manuscript may be just happenstance, the last page

light: Artem Fedorchuk, 'New Findings Relating to Hebrew Epigraphic', *The World of the Khazars – New Perspectives*, ed. Peter B. Golden (Leiden: Brill N.V., 2007), pp.121-122.

<sup>46</sup> It has also been argued, that Ḥasdai's letter is written in yet a third Hebrew style which complicates matters still further: Dunlop *Op. cit.* p.152.

<sup>47</sup> Including his recently (2004) examined Personal Archive: Fedorchuk, *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Daniel* 12 :6.

of a codex lost over the centuries. But there may be a more sinister explanation. Its tone may have been too 'Rabbinical' for the Karaite Firkowitsch who had argued that the form of Judaism the Khazars had adopted was Karaism and not rabbinical Judaism.<sup>49</sup> Its warmth may also not have suited Firkowitsch's agenda.

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The Khazar Correspondence is the second of the three texts in the ספר מבשר טוב (Book of Good Tidings) that Akrish included in the Hebrew miscellany he compiled and published in 1577 (Fig.193.6).

The first is entitled מעשה בוסתנאי (The Bustanai Affair) or מעשה בית דוד בימי מלכות פרס (The Story of the House of David in the Days of the Persian Kingdom). Bustanai (בוסתנאי), who was the first Exilarch (ראש גלות – Head of the Exile or Captivity)<sup>50</sup> to serve under Arab rule following the Beduin-Muslim defeat of the Persians in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, is the subject of several often contradictory Hebrew and Arabic legends, preserved in both medieval rabbinic texts and the Cairo Genizah.<sup>51</sup> In the introduction to the version he published, Akrish writes:

"Whilst searching for books, I found a written account of the dreadful Bustanai affair; one of the threats of extinction that we [the Jews] have experienced by reason of our iniquities...and his [Bustanai's] salvation was like that [of Queen Esther] in the Book of Esther. And I was surprised that it does not appear in the book *Shevet Yehudah* (Sceptre of Judah)<sup>52</sup> and perhaps God left it for me

<sup>49</sup> Adele Berlin, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.272.

<sup>50</sup> Hereditary heads of the Jewish community in Babylon, who traditionally traced their descent from the royal Davidic line, specifically from the penultimate king of Judah, Jehioachin, who was exiled to Babylon by Nebuhadnezzar in 597 BCE (2Kings 12:24ff.). Claims of Davidic descent were still being made by eminent Rabbis up to modern times. For example, the family of R. Solomon Hirschell (1762-1842), the first British Chief Rabbi, boasted a long genealogy of learned rabbis, tracing ten generations back to R. Myer of Padua who, in turn, speaks, in the preface to one of his works, of R. Hai Gaon being his progenitor: "This R. Hai was the last of the primates of the dispersed Israelites, who died in 1038; and all the primates and princes of the Captivity were deemed the genuine produce of King David's stock." See: 'A Memoir of the Reverend Solomon Hirschell: Chief Rabbi of the German Jews, London', *European Magazine and London Review* (March 1811).

<sup>51</sup> Moshe Gil, *The Babylonian Encounter and the Exilarchic House in the Light of Cairo Genizah Documents and Parallel Arab Sources*, *Judaica Arabica Studies*, ed. by Norman Golb (London: Routledge, 1997), p.135 ff.

<sup>52</sup> By Solomon ibn Verga (c.1460-1554), a Marrano from Lisbon, where he witnessed the massacre in 1506 and from where he later escaped to Turkey. The book contains

to print it...to make known that though in every generation they rise up against us, He saves us from their clutches...<sup>53</sup>

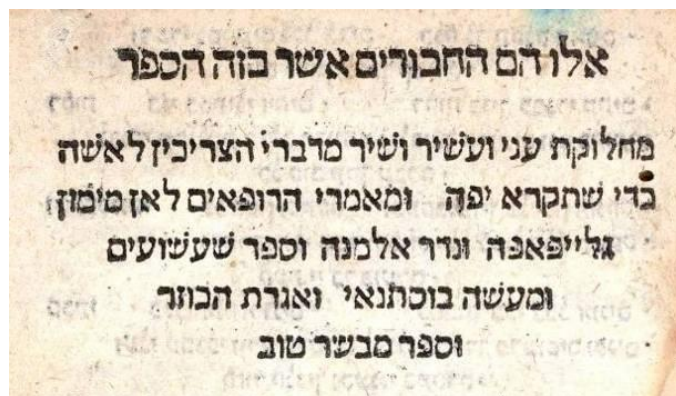


Fig. 193.6.

The heading on the first page of Akrish's miscellany: "These are the Compositions that are in this Book." The works listed in the fourth line are the "Bustanai Affair" and the "Khazar Correspondence;" that in the fifth line is "The Book of Good Tidings."

The version of the Bustanai legend published by Akrish has since become the best-known and most commonly cited.<sup>54</sup> Its salient points are as follows:

Inimical to the Jews, the last Persian king had determined to extinguish the royal house of David. The only person to escape the decree was a young woman, whose husband had been killed shortly after their marriage, and who was now about to give birth.

The king has a dream in which he finds himself in a most beautiful garden but one that is not his own. Consumed with envy, he sets about uprooting its plants and is about to dig up the last of them when an elderly man of "ruddy and fair countenance" (1Samuel 17:42) appears and strikes him a blow that almost kills him:

"Are you not satisfied with having destroyed the beautiful trees of my garden, that you now try to uproot even the very last sapling? Truly, you deserve that your memory perish from the earth."

Taken aback, the king relents and leaves the last plant in place promising to tend it and allow the garden to grow back.

The elderly father of the young woman is the only person who succeeds in interpreting the dream:

accounts of 64 persecutions of Jews in different countries and epochs.

<sup>53</sup> Bodleian Opp. 8° 1098, pp. 59-63.

<sup>54</sup> See: *Seder HaDorot* (The Book of Generations), by Jehiel Heilprin (1660–1746); completed 1725, published 1768 and in several subsequent editions (in Hebrew).



"The garden represents the house of David, all of whose descendants you have killed. The old man you saw in the dream was King David, to whom you promised that you would ensure that his line would survive. Now, the child my widowed daughter is carrying is the only one who can carry on the Davidic line." The king has the young woman brought to the palace where she gives birth to a boy, who is given the name "Bustanai," (from the Persian word *bustan*, meaning garden).

The lad grows up in the Royal palace and the king takes delight in him. One day when he was standing at attention before the king, a wasp stung the boy on his temple. Blood trickled down the face, yet he made no move.

The king was astonished by this self control and the boy explained that in the house of David, from which he comes, they are taught neither to laugh nor to lift up a hand when standing before a king, but to remain motionless out of respect (*TB Sanhedrin* 93a). Moved by this display of respect, the king showers favours upon him and names him Exilarch, with the power to appoint judges over the Jews and nominate the heads of the three Talmud academies. To mark this in perpetuity, Bustanai introduced a wasp into the escutcheon of the exilarchate.

Bustanai was the Exilarch when Persia fell to the Arabians. When Ali ibn Abi Talib<sup>55</sup> came to Babylon he went out to meet him with a splendid retinue. Upon learning that Bustanai was thirty-five years of age and still unmarried, Ali gave him Dara, the daughter of the defeated Persian king as his wife.

She was, however, a pagan and as such Bustanai could not marry her. Ali gave permission for her to become a Jewess according to Jewish law following which the couple were married. She bore him many children, but their legitimacy was assailed after their father's death by his other sons [he had taken other wives too] saying that they were the children of a slave-girl.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Regarded by Sunnis as the fourth and last of the Rashidun (rightly guided) Caliphs, he is regarded by Shia as the first Imam after Muhammad. In other versions it is the Caliph Omar (583-644) whom Bustanai welcomed.

<sup>56</sup> The objection was that Bustanai had cohabited with her without marrying her and, being a prisoner of war, she was a slave and had been presented to Bustanai as such. Against this it was argued that Bustanai must surely have first freed her and then married her. Opinion was divided and it was finally decided that the sons from his other wives should grant letters of manumission to Dara and her son in order to endorse their emancipation. Nevertheless, the legitimacy of her descendants was still in dispute even 300 years later.

In a postscript to the story, Akrish writes:

"I found [the texts] written on a parchment in Damascus with a *Messorah* (מסרה – colophon) that [stated] they were written in the year 3887AM [should be 4887, i.e., 1127CE] and that the book was written by so-and-so who bequeathed it to so-and-so, and so-and-so to so-and-so, up to ten generations."

There are nine or more extant fragmentary medieval sources of the Bustanai story and it has been suggested that what Akrish found in Damascus was a copy of the Arabic version composed by Nathan ben Abraham,<sup>57</sup> which he subsequently adapted, inserting elements from the gaonic *responsum* and adding elements of his own as he saw fit. This adapted version is what he then published in his miscellany of 'Good Tidings' texts.<sup>58</sup>

The same could well be true of the "the letter sent to the Khazar king and his reply to it" that Akrish saw in Cairo. It too was a manuscript that he came upon during his travels, and the manuscript in Christ Church MS 193 is a draft of the exchange of letters between Ḥasdai and the Khazar king that he prepared from it and which he subsequently published under the heading *Kol Mevasser*.

The third 'Good Tidings' text in the miscellany is entitled גם זה מבשר (This too is a Good Tiding). It is presented as being a report written by one Moshe HaCohen Ashkenazi from the city of Candia (Heraklion) in Crete, of what he had heard in 1483 CE from an Arab named Ali, a former slave, who claimed to have first hand knowledge of the existence of a wondrous Jewish nation across the Sambatyon river, close by Prester John's kingdom. Anticipating his readers probable disbelief, Akrish adds that despite the said Arab's "astonishing words" (דברי תימה), seeing that they tally with those in Prester John's letter to the Pope,<sup>59</sup> he decided to print them as, above all, they may "give courage to the oppressed."

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The Christ Church manuscript and Akrish's *Kol Mevasser* are no more forgeries than are the first quartos of Shakespeare's historical plays. The protagonists in both were real people. Shakespeare's kings did once rule and Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut and King Joseph of the Khazars, did once live and letters were

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<sup>57</sup> Nathan Gaon, *av bet din* (President of the Rabbinical Court) a.k.a Nathan Av.

<sup>58</sup> Moshe Gil, *Op.cit.* p.135 ff.

<sup>59</sup> A forged *Letter of Prester John* containing a wondrous description of his Christian kingdom, began spreading throughout Europe in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Such was its impact, that Pope Alexander III even sent a reply back to him.

actually exchanged, though perhaps not worded exactly as they are in any of the extant texts.

But just as we would not teach English history from Shakespeare's historical plays which were written just to entertain, we should not seek to learn Jewish or world history from folktales, Akriš's or anyone else's, whose purpose was not to inform but only to console and give hope.

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### Lord Portal Archive: New Insights



Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, seen in 1940.

Charles Frederick Algernon Portal was the Chief of Air Staff of the Royal Air Force for almost five years during the Second World War, yet he remains little known, even among the members of his former

Service. While Portal is not absent from the historical record per se, he is seldom more than a peripheral figure, seemingly unworthy of the spotlight. There is only one biography of Portal, written over 45 years ago by Denis Richards.<sup>1</sup> The absence of a more significant biographical record for such a central figure is puzzling, and is not due to lack of recognition at the time.

Portal was, according to Churchill, 'the acknowledged star of the Royal Air Force'. Eisenhower described Portal as 'the greatest of all British war leaders - greater even than Churchill.'<sup>2</sup>

Such accolades are not exceptions; they represent a common view of a man regarded, at the time, as one of the primary architects of Britain's wartime success. Praise for Portal at the time was widespread; his long-time deputy Freeman wrote. "There is no-one in the RAF or outside it that could have done the job you have done, or done it even half as well. This is not just fulsome praise. It is the absolute truth, and it written by someone who believes himself to be in a better position to judge than anyone else in the country..."<sup>3</sup>

As Chief of Air Staff, Portal was intimately involved in all aspects of the air war, and was central to critical elements of overall wartime strategy such as the Combined Bomber Offensive and the D Day landings, for which Harris and Tedder respectively have received historical recognition (if not credit). It is not a lack of regard from either within the RAF or without that explains Portal's relative anonymity, yet he is not alone.

Portal's historical anonymity is shared by his fellow Service leaders during World War Two. General Alan Brooke, head of the British Army and Chairman of the British Joint Staff Committee, is little known compared to General Bernard Montgomery, and Admiral Dudley Pound is overshadowed by Admiral Andrew Cunningham. Though Cunningham did succeed Pound as First Sea Lord, it is not for his role as First Sea Lord that Cunningham is celebrated, rather for his operational leadership during the Royal Navy's decisive victory at the Battle of Taranto. Portal's story is ignored in favour of those of Dowding, Tedder and Harris, not to mention Douglas Bader and Guy Gibson. It seems to be the actual warfighting that attracts both our admiration and our attention, and those at the top, with the exception of Churchill, are largely ignored. Or at least, their stories are.

<sup>1</sup> Denis Richards, *Portal of Hungerford: The Life of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Viscount Portal of Hungerford* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Portal Papers, Archive 2, Box VI, Minute 16, Christ Church, Oxford University.





In the Buckingham Palace courtyard, V.E. Day, May 1945.  
Left to right: Cunningham, George VI, Brooke, Portal.

We (both the military and the public) seem to care little for the work of strategists and Armed Forces politicians, preferring to study the romantic hero who defies the odds to deliver an unlikely victory. This may simply be a function of human nature; a representation of wanting to read in biography that which we crave in the fast paced fiction we ravenously consume. For the general public, this oversight is understandable. The public is entitled to read whatever fascinates them, as reading is purely a pastime. For the military, ignoring the histories of our wartime service chiefs borders on negligence. The heads of service deserve more attention, both for their outstanding contributions, but more especially for their continuing relevance to modern military leadership. Portal, Pound and Brooke tell stories that reflect the role of senior military leaders in the modern age, and this both deserves and requires study by the military scholar.

The history of military leaders is largely one populated by warrior kings. Warrior kings, such as Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte dominated their political and military environments. There was little need to think about political military integration, which was achieved seamlessly through unity of command. Such leaders can, in general, be characterized by supreme self-confidence, hubris bordering on arrogance and ruthlessness. These traits were essential for a Napoleon or an Alexander, but they have little place in the modern age where the military arm is subordinate to a higher political authority. There is, to be sure, still a place for the battlefield commander, yet at the apex of military services, different personal qualities must predominate. Balance, patience and diplomacy are, for example, vital characteristics of the successful service chief, and changes in warfare over the last 200 years have only exacerbated the importance of these qualities. It was two 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutions that marked this permanent change in the character of war.

The French political and British industrial revolutions altered the scale that wars were fought on, harnessing the power of nationalism and industry to mobilize the entire power of the state for war making. Prior to Napoleon, wars in Europe were fought by limited armies for limited objectives, and primarily only in the land environment. Napoleon changed the character of war by arming the common man, and necessitating this change for the other European great powers if they were to survive. The industrial revolution mobilized the common man in production, heralding a fundamental change in the lethality of war, first observed during the American Civil War. Mobility was enhanced through railway, lethality through the machine gun, yet further changes were to come that would intensify the change from war in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mobility would be further enhanced by the motor car and then the aircraft, and lethality was improved through scientific advancements in both accuracy and destructiveness of weapons, eventually leading to the invention of the atom bomb. The control of this new mobility in war was enabled by a communications revolution and this, in turn, changed the geography of war, which culminated in World War Two, a truly global conflict. It is in era of truly global war, where military and politics are separated, and senior military figures must bridge the divide, that we find Portal as head of the Royal Air Force.

The dramatic expansion of war during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, required officers that could think trans-continently, forge and maintain alliances, prioritize the respective requirements of air, land and sea campaigns and manage a complex set of relationships with subordinates, alliance officers, other armed services personnel and political leadership. Richard Betts once wrote that strategy is a series of relationships and Portal, in this respect, was a true strategist.<sup>4</sup> He had to deal with Churchill as head of state, other service leaders commanding the other military domains, a complex alliance relationship with the US and Russia and numerous prickly subordinates such as Arthur "Bomber" Harris.

The Portal Archive provides a unique resource for examining the manner in which Portal managed those around him during World War Two, most especially Churchill. Archive One contains 5 years of Prime Minister's minutes back and forth from Portal to Churchill that illustrates in great detail both the breadth and depth of Portal's influence on Churchill and overall involvement in British grand strategy. Though Churchill dominated British politics during the Second World War, Portal was able to exert considerable sway over him. Balance, patience and diplomacy were central to Portal's success.

<sup>4</sup> Richard K. Betts, "Is Strategy an Illusion?" *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000), p. 6.

Portal was a remarkably young 47 when he became Chief of Air Staff in October 1940. Portal himself said that the appointment was a great surprise, and that he harboured doubts about his ability to do the job. His fellow chiefs of staff, Sir John Dill and Sir Dudley Pound, were 11 and 16 years his senior respectively, so Portal's trepidation would have been completely natural.

Portal was always measured in his approach toward Churchill, and delivered his recommendations in a firm but logical light. One example came in early October 1941, when Portal responded to a minute from Churchill. Churchill stated that:

"It is very disputable whether bombing by itself will be a decisive factor in the present war. On the contrary, all that we have learnt since the war began shows that its effects, both physical and moral, are greatly exaggerated."

Rather than overreact to this minute, Portal composed his response in a logical and constructive manner. Portal began by reminding Churchill that:

"Since the fall of France it has been a fundamental principle of our strategy that victory over Germany could not be hoped for until German morale and German material strength had been subjected to a bombing offensive of the greatest intensity. This principle....has been re-affirmed by you on several occasions."<sup>5</sup>

Portal also referred to the declared British grand strategy affirmed by the Chiefs of Staff that stated:

"It is in bombing, on a scale undreamed of in the last war, that we find the new weapon on which we must principally depend for the destruction of economic life and morale....After meeting the needs of our own security, therefore, we give to the heavy bomber first priority in production. For only the heavy bomber can produce the conditions under which other offensive forces can be deployed."

Having reaffirmed the stated strategy of both Churchill himself and the Chiefs of Staff, Portal wisely went on to perceive the reasoning behind Churchill's earlier minute and get to the heart of the issue.

"I think it is easy to underestimate the consequences to Germany of a bombing offensive on the scale envisaged by the Air Staff as it is to over-estimate it. Interception technique will certainly improve; but so too will the technique of locating targets at night. Bomber defence will also improve. There are no certainties in war, but taking the various factors

together, I see no reason to regard the bomber as a weapon of declining importance."

This was not a blind defence of the role of the bomber, rather an acknowledgement that changes would come, but that there was no present reason to alter the strategic vision. Having addressed the argument logically, Portal went on to state:

"It is not the purpose of this minute to justify the contention that the bomber offensive will prove the decisive weapon. My object is to suggest the necessity for a clear picture of our aim. As I have said, existing directives afford such a picture and give a clear cut definition of the kind of Air Force we must create if victory is to be won. But these directives rest on the assumption that – given the necessary production – the Royal Air Force is capable by itself of carrying the disruption of Germany to a very advanced stage. If this assumption is no longer tenable we must produce a new plan."

Portal calmly stated the strategic realities to Churchill, but acknowledges that there could be other ways to pursue victory. Such strategies, though, would require a very differently composed Royal Air Force than that which was being procured. Portal never told Churchill what to do, and saw the bigger strategic picture, giving the recommendation that there was no reason to alter the strategic course, at that time.

This minute from Portal served multiple purposes. While it was a rebuttal of Churchill's critique of bomber strategy, it was also a marker in the fight for resources. The calls on bomber aircraft and pilots were many, notably the Battle of the Atlantic mentioned above.

By alluding to the means to victory, for which strategic bombing was a key enabler, Portal was subtly suggesting that the allocation of bombers to the Battle of the Atlantic needed to be reduced to enable bombing on the scale that Harris was envisaging.

Portal's argument was firm yet deferential, supportive but not blindly parochial. Portal was extolling the virtues of one of the principles of war: selection and maintenance of the aim. Strategy requires patience to work; it is not an instantaneous thing. Portal would reiterate the importance of this principle later in 1942:

"We must make up our minds how we are going to win this war and having made them up determine priorities and allot capacity accordingly. The production of unusable tanks, guns, bombs, ammunition and aircraft must be stopped."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Portal RAF Archive, Box 2, Christ Church, Oxford University: Minute Portal to PM, 2 Oct 41.

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<sup>6</sup> Portal RAF Archive, Box 3, Christ Church, Oxford University: Minute Portal to PM, 1 Oct 1942.

Portal's strategic vision and logical view of the bigger picture enabled him to build credibility from an early stage to influence Churchill.

However, Portal's strategic, balanced approach would also find great favour among the Allies.

Portal was possibly the most accomplished diplomat in the British military during World War Two. Eisenhower wrote that, "His distinguishing characteristic was balance, with perfect control of his temper; even in the most intense argument I never saw him show anger or unusual excitement."<sup>7</sup> Portal not only grasped the importance of the American alliance, he understood how much could be achieved through the Lend-Lease Act, which provided the Royal Air Force with additional aircraft that could not be produced by British industry.

One example of Portal's balance came following an announced reduction in the British allocation of aircraft from the US. Portal, understanding that Churchill was probably furious about this development, began by empathizing with Churchill's point of view, and one that it would have been easy for Portal (as RAF service chief) to share. Portal wrote that, "There is of course much to be said in reply to his (Arnold's) arguments as we, for our part, feel that any sudden curtailment of deliveries upon which we had counted would involve grave loss to the common effort."<sup>8</sup>

Portal then recommended a more constructive course of action.

"You may decide that your reply should not dwell on this aspect of the matter but instead should concentrate on the practical results we hope to achieve from the forthcoming discussions. In that event, I suggest the following would be the principal points to be brought out:

i) that we recognise and applaud the anxiety of the U.S. Air Forces to throw their full weight into the fight as early as possible;

ii) that a common expansion plan is necessary if maximum effort is to be obtained with the forces available;

iii) that in constructing such a plan the aim should be to secure the maximum impact of air power against the enemy that production and shipping permit – irrespective of whether British or U.S. pilots man the aircraft;

iv) that the visit of Arnold and Towers is an essential stage in the preparation of such a plan and is heartily welcomed on that account;

v) that we agree the final stages of the discussion will probably have to be concluded in Washington and that for this purpose I should return to the U.S. with Arnold and Towers."



In the Buckingham Palace courtyard, V.E. Day, May 1945. Left to right: Portal, Churchill, George VI.

This magnanimous and selfless approach, ignoring organizational preferences in favour of the greater strategic picture, highlights Portal's awareness of the bigger picture and his ability to put any petty concerns aside in pursuit of grand strategy objectives. In his own account of the negotiations, Arnold describes Churchill and Portal as being extremely willing to see things from his perspective.<sup>60</sup>

Arnold was both surprised and pleased that the British chose to take this approach, and this further cemented the US-UK alliance and the close working relationship between the RAF and USAAF that would become even more crucial during the Combined Bomber Offensive. Portal was held in extremely high

<sup>7</sup> Eisenhower, Dwight D. *Crusade in Europe*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday), 1948, p. 266.

<sup>8</sup> Portal RAF Archive, Box 3, Christ Church, Oxford University: Minute Portal to PM, 16 May 1942.

<sup>60</sup> Yenne, Bill. *Hap Arnold : The General Who Invented the U.S Air Force* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery History, 2013), p. 100.



esteem by all the Americans, and it was his ability to see the bigger picture that shone through, and set him apart from other British military personnel.

“Harry Hopkins and all the Americans thought very highly of him, and he got on well with all the top brass – General Marshall thought very well of him, and they felt he wasn’t playing games, he didn’t have an axe to grind. Sholto Douglas and Monty both had a personal thing, but Peter never wanted anything for himself.....The Americans fought hard with Monty, but I don’t know any of them who knew Peter who didn’t adore him”<sup>61</sup>

Portal’s diplomatic approach to alliance matters continued as the American bomber effort developed in England. Portal was always aware of Churchill’s acerbic tongue and did what he could to prevent any outburst that could sour relations.

On several occasions, Portal took the time to Minute Churchill regarding the improvements in American bombing performance, a matter of great import to the war effort and a sensitive subject for all.

On 6 April 1943 Portal wrote to Churchill describing the “outstanding success” of an American raid against submarine building yards at Vegesack.

On 12<sup>th</sup> July Portal sent photographs of a successful US attack on the Renault Works in France asserting that “They seem to have made a very good job of it”.

On 12<sup>th</sup> October 1943 he again applauded “the best high altitude bombing we have seen in this war” and enclosed reconnaissance photographs to Churchill to meet a query regarding US ability to be accurate enough to hit a target within St James’ Park.

Portal was ever conscious of the importance of the alliance and served the greater needs of the war by choosing to highlight American success when he could have parochially highlighted their failures instead and elevated Bomber Command in the eyes of the Prime Minister.

This would have been an understandable course of action as Bomber Command was also under pressure from Churchill, however, Portal understood the strategic value of a close alliance relationship and fostered that in preference to a more small-minded approach.



The War Cabinet in the garden at Downing Street, 1941.  
Left to right (back): Portal, Pound, Sinclair, Margesson, Dill, Ismay, Hollis; (front) Beaverbrook, Attlee, Churchill, Eden, A.V. Alexander.

There are many personal qualities that enabled Peter Portal to have such a marked effect on Britain’s wartime effort. This article has merely touched the surface of his engagement with the Prime Minister, who quickly began to attach significance to Portal’s objective and strategic point of view. Sadly, history has largely, and undeservedly, overlooked Portal as a central figure in Britain’s wartime success. In large part this is attributable to his cooperative approach and the lack of controversy with which he went about his business. Portal was perhaps the archetypal modern military officer. His calmness and strategic outlook served him well with Churchill, the Allies and sister services. His biographer Denis Richards acknowledged the difficulties of writing about a man who coveted neither controversy nor publicity, who achieved everything through compromise and quietly succeeded. Reading about Portal as the central figure is much like telling the Harry Potter stories from Dumbledore’s perspective. I, for one, would like to read more about the quiet strategist.

*Rich Milburn*  
Air War College, Maxwell, AL

Wing Commander Rich Milburn is a Royal Air Force officer and current instructor at the Air Command and Staff College in Alabama. He graduated from the University of Durham in 1996 with a Bachelor of Laws degree. He is also a graduate of the Aerosystems Course in 2008 and the United States Air Force’s Air Command and Staff College Class of 2016. Wg Cdr Milburn’s doctoral dissertation examines Lord Portal’s leadership of the RAF during the Second World War.

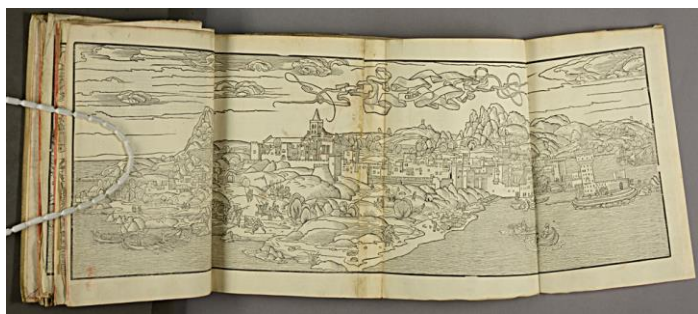
Note: Some elements of this article were published in Churchill and Portal: A Strategic Relationship *Finest Hour*, the Journal of the International Churchill Society., No. 185 (2019).

<sup>61</sup> Portal Papers-Denis Richards Archive, Christ Church, Oxford University: Interview: Mrs A. Harriman-D. Richards, 18 July 1973.

## Conserving von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam*

At the Oxford Conservation Consortium (OCC), we provide conservation and collection care services to sixteen of the Oxford colleges, and so are privileged to see and treat many rare and fascinating books and documents from the colleges' collections. However, it was a special treat for us to be given the task of conserving *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam* from Christ Church library.

This remarkable book is an account of the pilgrimage taken by German nobleman Bernhard von Breydenbach (ca. 1440-1497) from Venice to Jerusalem in 1483. The first edition was printed in 1486 by Peter Drach, but the book proved so popular that many others followed, with the edition in Christ Church library being printed in 1502.<sup>1</sup> The text is in Latin, probably compiled from von Breydenbach's notes by the Dominican monk Martin Roth.



Detail of the woodcut of Crete (here known as 'Candia') before treatment. Note the battle happening on the shore.

It is easy to see why there was such demand for the book. On his way to the Holy Land, von Breydenbach and his companions stopped at various ports including Corfu, Methoni, Crete, Rhodes, and Cyprus, with the book describing religious doctrines, languages, and distances between ports, as well as advice on avoiding travel pitfalls.

But quite aside from the text itself, the book also includes numerous beautiful woodcuts of the locations von Breydenbach visited during his journey. Based on sketches made by Dutch painter Everard van Reewijk, the woodcuts are some of the first detailed illustrations of these places ever to be printed. Particularly stunning are five fold-out woodcuts—views of Venice, Methoni, Rhodes, Crete, and Jerusalem—which were the first folding plates to be included in a printed book. Christ Church's copy is rare in still having these fold-outs included. In other copies, these marvellous woodcuts have often been removed—most likely so they could be sold separately.

<sup>1</sup> Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Sanctarum peregrinationum in Hierusalem opusculum* (Peter Drach, 1502). Christ Church shelfmark: Arch. Inf. B.3.12.



The Jerusalem fold-out before treatment, crumpled and misfolded. At the top you can see the iron-gall ink annotations have been trimmed off at the time of rebinding.

The Christ Church copy of *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam* has been rebound since its printing and is now in a 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century parchment binding sewn on four supports of alum-tawed skin. Certain evidence gives away that the binding is not contemporary with the printing: the text block has been trimmed, removing portions of earlier iron gall ink annotations, and red edge-colouring has been added. There is also staining on the endleaves that may indicate a previous leather binding.

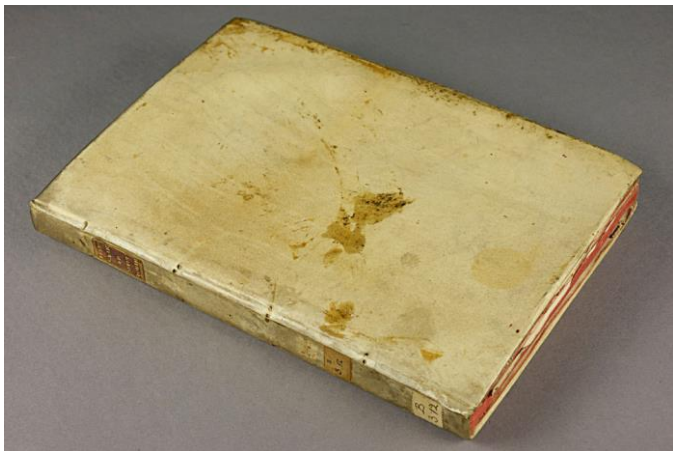


The head-edge of the book, showing the crumpled and misfolded woodcuts.

The book was prioritised for conservation due to the difficulties in safely handling and viewing the woodcuts. When it arrived in the conservation studio, its problems were clear. The fold-outs that had been so impressive were now heavily creased and crumpled where they had been re-folded in incorrect positions. This was especially true of the Venice and Jerusalem fold-outs, which are much larger than the other three. Indeed, the Venice woodcut is over a metre long—so large that I could not fully unfold it on my workbench! The fold-outs must have caused problems from the very beginning, for a number of early repairs had already been adhered to their versos in an attempt to repair tears. I could identify two stages of early repair from different periods. First, large repairs of thick paper had been adhered to the verso of the Jerusalem foldout with animal glue. Second, occasional smaller repairs had been added to all of the fold-outs in a lighter paper adhered with starch paste; these were obviously applied later as some were on top of the thick paper repairs. The exact date of these two stages of repair

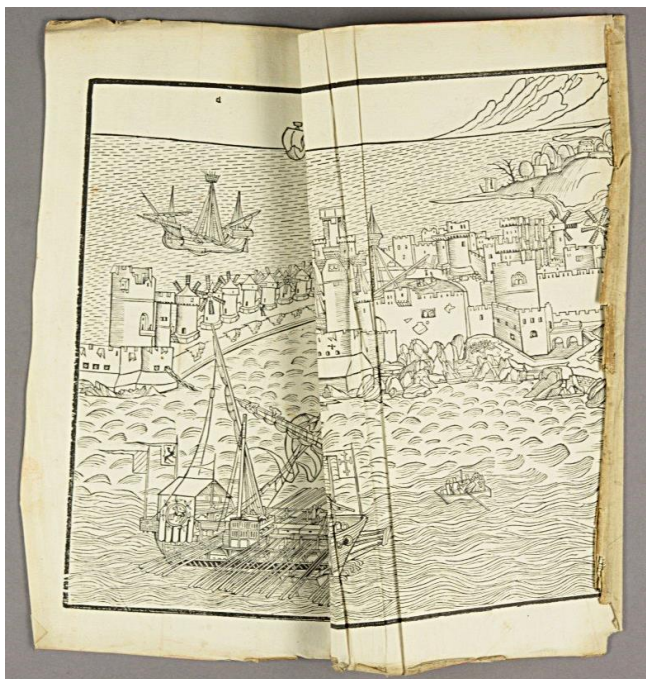


is uncertain, but a clue lies in the text block's red edge-colouring, which has been applied over all of the repairs. If the edge-colouring was added at the same time as the current binding—which seems likely—then the repairs must already have been in place at that time.



The binding before treatment; red edge-colouring is visible.

Unfortunately, these old repairs were also causing varying amounts of damage to the woodcuts. The repairs on the Jerusalem fold-out were the most disruptive and damaging, in particular the two large, older paper repairs that had been adhered with a thick, roughly applied layer of animal glue. The adhesive was stiff and brittle and had cockled the paper, causing handling difficulties as well as making it impossible to fold the fold-out back in line with the text block. In addition to these problems, the Rhodes fold-out had torn away from the text block and the paper was very fragile along the torn edges. Other small edge-tears were visible throughout the volume, and three of the sewing supports were broken along the front joint.

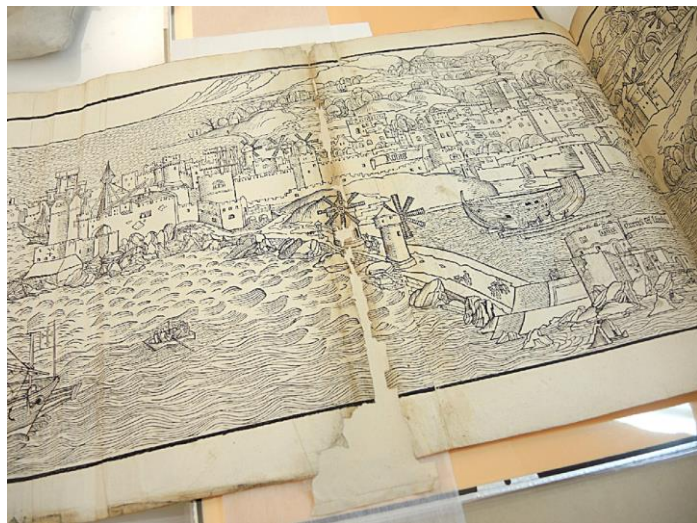


The detached and crumpled Rhodes fold-out.

The priority was to repair the fold-outs and make them easier to handle, so that the book would be more accessible to researchers and at less risk of further damage. The first step was to clean the book, removing any particulate dirt that had collected. To do this I used a latex sponge, with a softer polyurethane sponge for the more fragile areas. It is vital to do cleaning before applying any repairs or humidifying the paper, as moisture can cause dirt to become ingrained—at which point it becomes almost impossible to remove.

The next step was to flatten the fold-outs where they had been folded in the wrong position. I began by gently humidifying the paper to make it more pliable.

The humidification was achieved by covering the paper first with Goretex™ and laying a piece of damp capillary matting on top. The area was then covered with a polythene sheet to prevent the matting drying out. The Goretex blocks water droplets but allows water vapour to pass through, which enabled me to apply moisture to the paper in a slow, controlled manner. I then dried the paper between blotters and under light weight to flatten it, before refolding each fold-out in the correct position.



The Rhodes fold-out during reattachment, with Western paper infills applied but not yet trimmed. The orange sheet beneath the page is a light sheet—when turned on, the light transmitted through the paper and I could trace out the shapes of the infills using a needle while protecting the woodcut with a sheet of heavy polyester film.

Next, I repaired tears on the edges of the fold-outs. This was done with thin but strong Japanese paper, which is made from the fibres of the kozo plant (paper mulberry), adhered with purified wheat starch paste.

Wheat starch paste is widely used in conservation due to its good ageing properties and the fact that it can be easily reactivated by applying moisture if the repairs ever need to be removed.



The detached Rhodes fold-out demanded extra consideration. Once the detached section had been flattened, it needed to be reattached to the text block. To achieve this, I reinforced the fragile edge of the detached section with a very thin Japanese tissue—weighing only 3.5 grams per square metre—and did the same to the edge where the fold-out had torn away from the text block, though this time I left the tissue extended beyond the edge. I was then able to use the tissue to reattach the detached piece in place.

There were portions of missing paper along the join; these were infilled with Western paper, toned with acrylic paints to match the colour of the original. Lastly, more thin Japanese tissue was pasted on top of these to consolidate the repair. The fold-out could then be refolded in place.

The Jerusalem fold-out received the most extensive treatment, due to the problems being caused by the old repairs adhered to its verso. After much discussion with the Librarian, it was decided that some of the repairs—those of lighter paper that had been adhered with starch paste—would be left in place as they were causing minimal disruption either structurally or aesthetically.

In contrast, the larger, heavier prior repairs were causing many structural problems and so we decided to remove them in order to reduce the presence of the brittle animal glue adhesive, the resulting cockling, and the difficulty in handling and folding the woodcut.

Removing them would also allow me to repair the tears to the paper beneath with more effective, conservation-grade materials. The decision was not made lightly, however, as despite their damaging effects the old repairs are still part of the book's history, giving an insight into how it has been used and treated in the past.



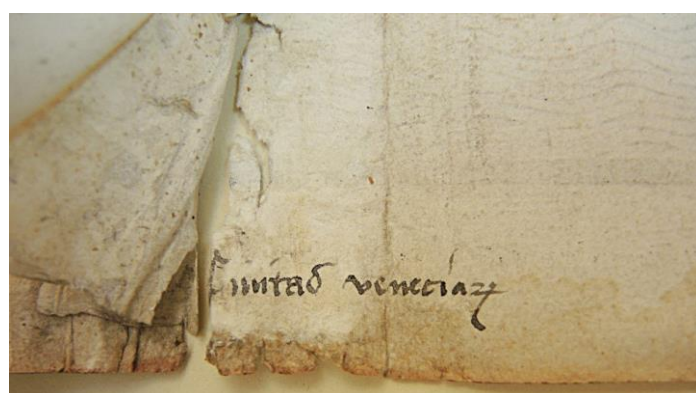
The verso of the Jerusalem fold-out before treatment, showing the two heavy prior repairs and the roughly applied animal glue (to the right-hand side of the image).

The old repairs covered an extensive area and the animal glue was applied thickly, which made it difficult to lift them without the potential of causing damage to the support paper. After some

experimentation, I managed to lift them through a combination of controlled moisture and heat application. I introduced moisture to the paper by way of a rigid gel (7% agarose in deionised water), cut down to a small slab of approximately 3cm x 2cm and placed on the surface of the paper through a barrier layer of spun polyester.

The gel released moisture slowly, and only in that targeted area. I applied heat using a small electronic hand warmer laid on top of the gel.

Together, the moisture and heat softened the animal glue and allowed me to peel the old repairs away from the fold-out without damaging the surface of the paper. The repairs were then placed in a sleeve of polyester film to be stored alongside the book, ensuring that this part of the object's history is not lost.



Lifting the repairs revealed earlier writing on the verso of the Venice fold-out.

I was then able to humidify and flatten the fold-out and repair it with Japanese paper, as I had done with the others.

With the repairs and animal glue removed, the cockling was greatly reduced and the paper much less brittle, allowing the fold-out to be folded back in line with the text block rather than protruding from the fore-edge as it had done before.

After discussion with the Librarian, we decided that the book's broken inner joint would not be treated at this time, as repairing the joint would make the binding tighter and therefore more difficult to open and show the fold-outs without causing damage. We thus decided to leave the binding as is and monitor it over time to see how it fares with careful usage. There is potential for the binding to be repaired at a later date if deemed necessary.

This was a challenging conservation project to complete, but an extremely satisfying one. The decision-making process was aided by examining existing copies of *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam* in other Oxford collections to improve our understanding of the Christ Church copy.

I had not worked extensively with gels before, and this project gave me the opportunity to work with OCC Senior Conservator Celia Bockmuehl to learn more about this material and technique. The book is now more stable and the fold-outs much easier to handle, and so can now be accessed safely by researchers wishing to study this remarkable volume, as well as exhibited in the Library for all to see.



The head-edge after treatment. Much happier!

Jess Hyslop

Oxford Conservation Consortium

Jess studied English at the University of Cambridge and Cultural Studies at Birkbeck College, London, before completing a Master's in Conservation of Books and Library Materials at West Dean College. She was the Project Conservator for the one-year Minton Archive conservation project at the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service before joining the team at the Oxford Conservation Consortium in August 2017.

## East-West Connections in the Wake Archive

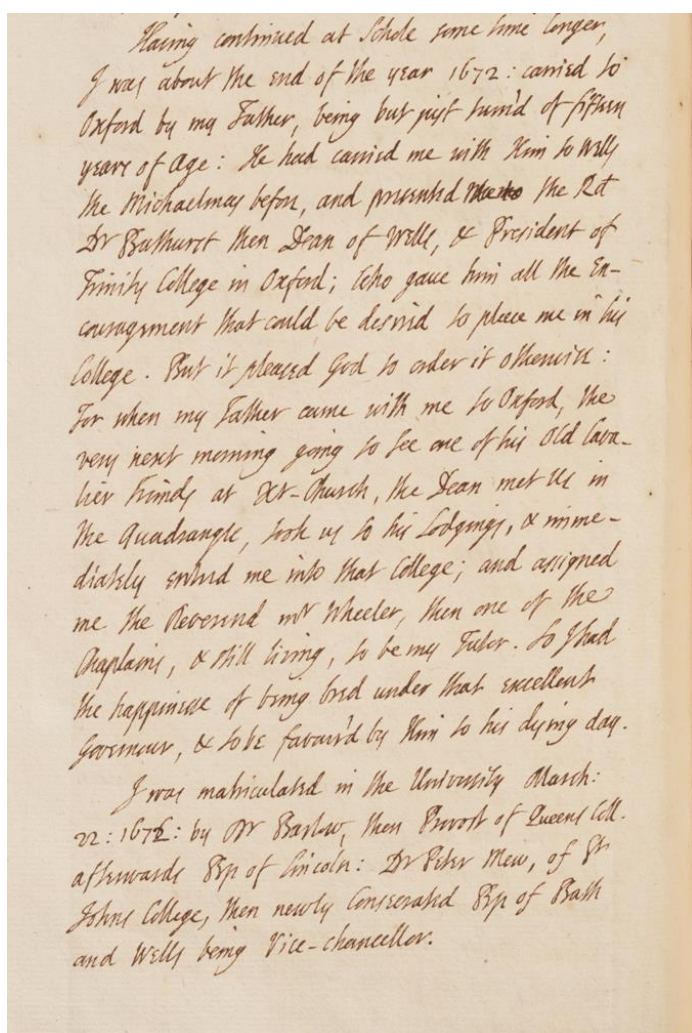
On a fateful day in 1673, John Fell, Dean of Christ Church at the time, took a decision that would, in the future, open a new chapter in the college's history. He enrolled William Wake as a Commoner of the House. The events of that day set off a chain of events that would ultimately lead to Wake becoming Archbishop of Canterbury and an important meeting point in the communication between British high clergy and cosmopolitan Greek rulers of the Levant, such as Nikolaos Mavrocordatos (1680 - 1730).

The library that Wake bequeathed to Christ Church holds several letters and manuscripts that are key documents for understanding this unique convergence between East and West in the 'Republic of Letters'. These documents not only give access to a hitherto neglected historical moment, but also allow us to compare the legacies of Wake and Mavrocordatos, and the different afterlives of their intellectual projects.

Two quotes, one from Norman Sykes' book on William Wake, and another, from the Archbishop's autobiography tell us the beginning of the story:

"Since the Wake family was not unprosperous, when William distinguished himself at the local school, his father decided to enter him at one of the colleges at Oxford. On a visit to Wells, he was presented by his father to the Dean of the Cathedral, Dr Bathurst, also President of Trinity College, Oxford; and it was with the intention of entering him at that college that father and son rode to Oxford early in 1673."<sup>1</sup>

"But it pleased God to order otherwise. For when my father came with me to Oxford, the very next morning, going to see one of his old cavalier friends at Christ Church, the Dean met us in the quadrangle, took us to his lodgings, and immediately entered me into that college; and assigned me to the Reverend Mr Wheeler, then one of his chaplains, to be my tutor. So I had the happiness of being bred under that excellent governor and to be favoured by him to his dying day."<sup>2</sup>



Detail from the autograph manuscript of William Wake's Autobiography. Christ Church Library, MS 541A, p 6.

Being matriculated as a Commoner of the House on 28 February 1673, Wake's name was entered among

<sup>1</sup> Norman Sykes, *William Wake Archbishop of Canterbury 1657-1737* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p.9.

<sup>2</sup> William Wake, *Autobiography*, Christ Church Library, MS 541A, p.6.



the Seniors in December 1676. In 1716, William Wake was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury and remained in office until his death in 1737.

By a deed of appointment of 17 April 1728, he bequeathed to the Dean of Christ Church and the Regius Professors of Divinity all his books, manuscripts and coin collections. In his will, dated 12 February 1731, he left orders that his collection should be conveyed to the College:

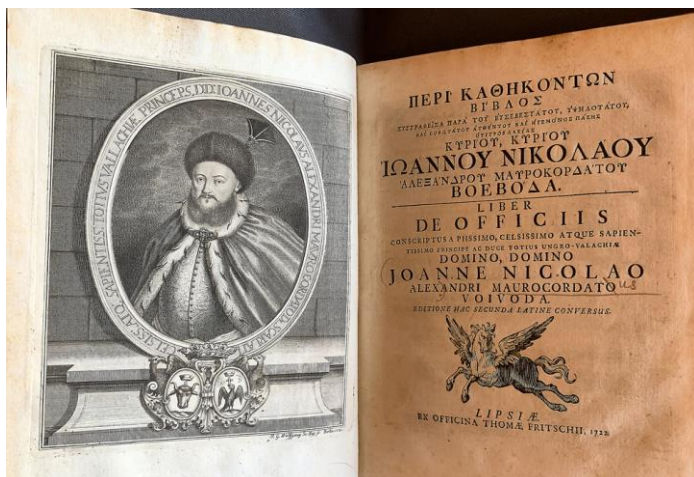
“[...] by land carriage only and not by water, to the end to avoid any damage with might happen to the said books, manuscripts, and other things [...]”<sup>3</sup>

So, a huge collection of printed books, manuscripts, volumes of Archbishop Wake’s correspondence, as well as a valuable collection of coins would soon arrive at Christ Church, accompanied by c.£5,000 provided towards the construction of a new library.

Among all this, 31 volumes in folio and quarto of letters and original papers from Archbishop Wake’s private correspondence.

Wake correspondence volume 26 contains 20 letters pointing to the provenance of 2 of the Byzantine manuscripts and 2 of the printed books in his collections. The 2 manuscripts, MS 21 and MS 26, will not be discussed at this point.

We will start by emphasizing the importance of *Peri ton tathekonton* (Περὶ των καθηκόντων βιβλος, “On Duties”, also known through its Latin title *De Officiis*), a printed book that Christ Church still holds the second edition of in duplicate under the shelfmarks WK4.5 and WK.4.6.<sup>4</sup>



Frontispiece and title page of Nikolaos Mavrocordatos’ *Peri kathēkontōn biblos*. Christ Church shelfmark WK.4.6.

<sup>3</sup> Lambeth Palace Library, MSS.1133, 12 February 1731.

<sup>4</sup> Nikolaos Mavrocordatos, *Peri kathēkontōn biblos / Liber de officiis conscriptus a ... Joanne Nicolao Alexandri Maurocordato, voivoda [...]* (Lipsiæ. : Ex officina Thomæ Fritschii, 1722).

This is the book that made the name of Nikolaos Mavrocordatos known in Europe, not just as a bibliophile and ruler in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, but also as an author.

This article aims to look at the parallel destinies of Mavrocordatos and Wake, their encounter in the ‘Republic of Letters’ through their shared passion for antiquities and library-building projects.

It will follow the special place Mavrocordatos took up in the 18<sup>th</sup> century intellectual landscape, and his unique background in the Greek Ottoman intellectual sphere. It will explore the channels he used in order to build his library, how scholarly networks helped to disseminate the book that he wrote, and how this book ultimately reached William Wake’s library.

This study also aims to examine how Mavrocordatos used his publication to promote an image of the two East European principalities he ruled. Finally, it ponders over the very similar ambitions of Mavrocordatos and Wake in establishing leading intellectual institutions, through coin collecting and establishing important libraries. Although the imprint the two men have left on posterity could not be more different, they emerged from a vibrant intellectual climate where two great scholars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at the opposite ends of Europe could bond over shared values.

## Nikolaos Mavrocordatos

Nikolaos Mavrocordatos was the first in a long row of rulers called Phanariotes, appointed by the Ottomans to rule the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, after the local nobility became untrustworthy by turning to Austrian or Russian protection. Born in Phanar, the Greek quarter of Istanbul, Nikolaos came from a family of scholars. His father, Alexander Mavrocordatos, the Exaporite, had studied at Padua.

The Mavrocordatos were part of the highly-educated Greeks who found a good opportunity to make their multilingual education useful, at a time when, in the Ottoman Empire it was forbidden for Muslim subjects to learn a non-Koranic language. As a consequence, they were able to occupy higher and higher positions in the diplomatic apparatus, first as interpreters (so-called *dragomans*), and then even as private Councillors to the Sultan.

Their power, however, was limited, so they began looking towards Moldavia and Wallachia, to whose ruling houses they were already related.

There was the opportunity to get hold of real power, as well as make use of their Greek cultural inheritance by emulating the Byzantine tradition. Although initially not well received by the local

nobility, the Phanariotes were able to use their influence in Istanbul and buy their position as rulers, first in Moldavia and then in Wallachia.

### **Building an Empire of Letters The Sources of Mavrocordatos' Collection**

Mavrocordatos' book collection was held partly in Istanbul and partly in Bucharest. A huge number of volumes were inherited from his father's library. A second source was that of his father-in-law Ioannis Chrysoskoulaïos..

Nikolaos' own book acquisitions started early, at eighteen, when he took over from his father the position of *dragoman*. Buying books in the Ottoman Empire, where widespread printing and a mature market for printed books had not yet developed, was not an easy task. He had to rely on orders from foreign bookshops and auction houses. Hence his library was well stocked with a huge number of catalogues from printers, publishers and book shops from major European centres. All these endeavours required not only great financial resources, but also an appropriate network and agents. This is where Jean Leclerc (1657-1736) enters our story. Leclerc was a Swiss living in Amsterdam. The city was one of the hubs of European printing at the time, and Leclerc became the link between the two bibliophiles, Nikolaos Mavrocordatos and Archbishop Wake.

The voracious acquisitiveness of Mavrocordatos was well known throughout the bibliophile circles of Europe. Paul Bignon, the Librarian of Louis XV, wrote in a letter that, 'throughout Greece and the entire Eastern orthodox cultural realm, Nikolaos' agents would buy the most precious and interesting manuscripts and medals, with no regard to the price.'<sup>5</sup>

However, going back to other sources of his collections, one must mention the fact that the Prince also did not hesitate to confiscate books from the humanist libraries of many of his predecessors. As a result, a huge part of the Cantacuzino library from Mărgineni monastery and the Brâncoveanu library from Hurezu monastery were "transferred" to Mavrocordatos' property. Incidentally, his brother, Ioanis Mavrocordatos, a passionate Orientalist himself, would do the same, after Dimitrie Cantemir, Prince of Moldavia, had to flee to Russia. Ioanis "transferred" to his own collections the content of the library that Cantemir had collected in over two decades.

<sup>5</sup> "Le prince de Valachie a achete ce qu'il avoit de plus curieux en livres et en manuscrits dans L'Empire Otoman, sans regarder au prix". Letter of Paul Bignon, as reproduced in Tudor Dinu, *Dimitrie Cantemir si Nicolae Mavrocordat. Rivalitati politice si literare la inceputul secolui XVIII* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011). p.363.

Nikolaos Mavrocordatos also received a great number of books as gifts from notable people, such as Hrisant Nottara, the orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem (1707-1729). The two were bound by an intellectual affinity and had a long exchange of letters and books. Apart from books, Nottara, a passionate astronomer (taught in Paris by none other than Giovanni Domenico Cassini), is documented to have sent a telescope to Nikolaos Mavrocordatos. The two joined efforts to rebuild the Princely Academy in Moldavia where the teaching was free of charge and everybody showing interest in learning was accepted. They also joined forces to sustain and consolidate the cause of the rights of the Eastern orthodox people from the Holy Land in the face of the increased expansion of Catholicism in the area.

### **A Meeting in the 'Republic of Letters'**

Nikolaos Mavrocordatos and Patriarch Hrisant Nottara became part of an intellectual network that would extend from the Levant to England. At some point, in 1724, Mavrocordatos introduced Patriarch Nottara to William Wake, the Primate of the Anglican Church. After that, Nottara started sending books to Wake, and the two also engaged in very interesting correspondence, which lasted for 2 years, between 1725 and 1727."<sup>6</sup>

A great part of this correspondence, and documents related to Nottara and Wake is now at Christ Church. From a letter dated 2 July 1725, signed Marco Nomico, we find out that the latter had brought 6 books from the Patriarch and dispatched them to the Archbishop: "May it Please y'r Grace: I had the hon'r of bringing to y'r Grace at two different times three books; an humbly present from the holy Patriarch of Jerusalem."<sup>7</sup>

According to Jesse Torgerson, this letter provides the earliest concrete evidence for books travelling internationally as presents into the hands of William Wake [...] whose long occupation of the Archbishopric has put him in a position to receive diplomatic gifts which would lend their own unique flavour to the collection. According to Torgerson, "the scholars whom the Archbishop engaged were themselves involved in academic networks with their own dynamics and interests, which would in turn exert influence back upon William Wake. This would

<sup>6</sup> "Les deux dignitaires ont échangé des lettres en 1725 et 1727, à la suite d'un envoi de livres de la part de Chrysanthé. See J. Bouchard, 'Les relations épistolaires de Nicolas Mavrocordatos avec Jean Le Clerc et William Wake', *The Gleaner*, 11 (2016), pp. 67-92. DOI <https://doi.org/10.12681/er.9386> (Accessed on 14 March 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Wake Letters, Vol.26, No 297. Christ Church Library.



affect what antiquities he collected and how he acquired them”.<sup>8</sup>

As mentioned before, an important hub for these academic networks was Amsterdam, the place where Jean Leclerc resided. He was one of the most active book agents, not only for the Mavrocordatos, but also for Archbishop Wake.<sup>9</sup>

Christ Church Library and Amsterdam University Library are holding a number of letters in Latin and French, witnessing this cultural dialogue. Volumes 25 and 26 of William Wake's correspondence at Christ Church library hold 18 letters from Jean Leclerc to the Archbishop, and 2 letters signed by Mavrocordatos and written by his secretary, Antoine Epis, all in Latin. The Christ Church volumes also include drafts of letters written by William Wake to Mavrocordatos and Leclerc. Another 13 letters from the Archbishop to Leclerc are at the Amsterdam University Library. The same library also holds 42 letters written on behalf of Mavrocordatos to Leclerc, spanning from 1720 to 1727. From these, 28 are written by his secretary, Antoine Epis, in French, and the other 14 by Nicholas Wolff in Latin. The correspondence spans from 1716 to 1727.

Jean Leclerc is an important figure in this story. He not only served as a mediator between 18<sup>th</sup> century European scholars, but also informed their taste through his publication of *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*.<sup>10</sup> It was through this publication that Leclerc became acquainted with Mavrocordatos on the occasion of the publication of the aforementioned *Peri ton kathēkonton*. This initiated a series of exchanges that would ultimately lead to the encounter between Mavrocordatos and Wake.

### **Mavrocordatos' *Peri kathēkontōn biblos***

*Peri kathēkontōn biblos* (De officiis), written by Nikolaos Mavrocordatos in 1719, is a treatise on ethics, focusing mainly on a ruler's duties, and reflecting the author's own experience. The book was highly praised across scholarly communities in Europe. A review of it in the *Giornale de'Letterati d'Italia* praised the erudition of the polyglot Prince,

<sup>8</sup> Jesse W. Torgerson, 'William Wake's Byzantine Manuscripts Notes on Provenance', *Christ Church Library Newsletter*, Volume 6, Issue 1 (2009), pp.21.

<sup>9</sup> "Le Clerc était l'homme tout indiqué : arbitre de la République des Lettres par sa «Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne» et résidant à Amsterdam, carrefour de l'édition et de la librairie. De fait, le prince de Valachie et le polygraphes d'Amsterdam se meuvent dans le même climat intellectuel, celui de l'érudition, de la culture encyclopédique, des sciences naturelles, des questions politiques et religieuses." See J. Bouchard, *Op. cit.*, p.74

<sup>10</sup> Jean Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*, 29 v. (Amsterdam : Chez David Mortier; La Haye : Chez Pierre Husson, 1714-1730).

naming the book "un compendio di cristiana filosofia". The review is the first to make a written record of the bibliophilic passion of Mavrocordatos, mentioning the two collections he put together, one in Constantinople and another in Wallachia.<sup>11</sup>

Jean Leclerc too wrote a review of *Peri kathēkontōn biblos* in volume 14 of his *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*. However, praising the style and the elevated spirit of this work, Leclerc makes the mistake of presuming that the author is Alexander Mavrocordatos, the father of Nikolaos, and that he was killed by the Turks.

This statement brought a swift reply from Antoine Epis, Nikolaos Mavrocordatos' secretary. The fact subsequently sparked Leclerc's interest in the Prince and a long cultural dialogue followed. Leclerc published Epis' letter, dated 8 November 1720, followed by his answer, dated 31 December 1720, in the same *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*.

### **Letters and Gifts between Wake and Mavrocordatos**

Leclerc's review of the *Peri kathēkontōn biblos* led to the acquisition by Archbishop Wake of Mavrocordatos' treatise. However, this publication would first undergo an interesting and convoluted odyssey before it reached England. This we can follow in Archbishop Wake's correspondence with Jean Leclerc and Nicolaus Mavrocordatos. Most of it is now kept in Christ Church Library.

It was in the letter dated 25 November 1721<sup>12</sup> that Leclerc mentioned the name of Nikolaos Mavrocordatos to the Archbishop for the first time. The reason for this was that, in a letter dated 29 October 1721,<sup>13</sup> Mavrocordatos had asked Leclerc to procure him an Oxford edition of the Psalms. This determined Leclerc to introduce the East European Prince to William Wake, wondering whether he could find the book for Mavrocordatos.

Leclerc mentioned Mavrocordatos again in letter number 24, dated April 1722. This time in order to inform the Archbishop that the Septuagint he sent to Bucharest was very appreciated. Leclerc also praised the Prince's culture and dedication to the orthodox church, which, in his opinion, was in many ways similar to the Anglican church.

<sup>11</sup> ' Articolo XI. Novelle Letterarie d'Italia degli anni MDCCXIX.1. Novelle straniere appartenenti all'Italia. Bucarest in Valachia', *Giornale de'Letterati d'Italia* volume 33, first part-1719-1720 (Venezia:1721), pp.511-518.

<sup>12</sup> Wake Letters, Vol.25, No. 263, Christ Church Library.

<sup>13</sup> Document K 40p (dated 29 October 1721), Amsterdam University Library.





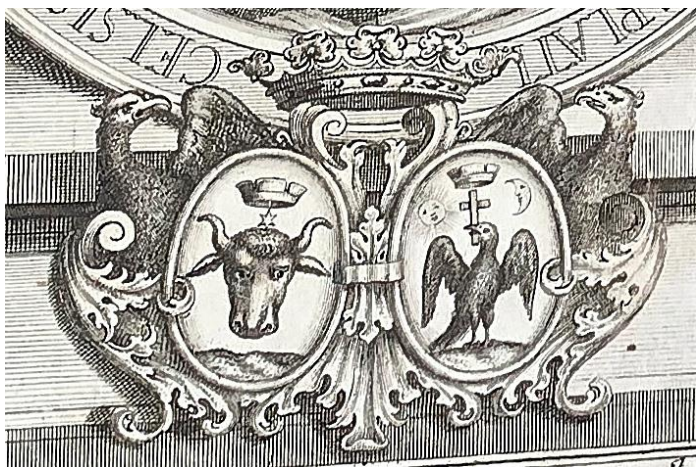
As he mentioned in another draft (letter number 90) dated 1 March 1722, Wake intended to give one copy of the *Peri ton kathekonton* to Lambeth Library. However, we are not aware of the presence of a copy in the library nowadays.<sup>17</sup>

Maybe it is not a coincidence, and it was at William Wake's suggestion, that an edition of this work was also published in London shortly afterwards.<sup>18</sup>

### Printed Books and Heraldry

One must mention one more interesting feature of the volumes held at Christ Church: the coat of arms under the portrait of Nikolaos Mavrocordatos, realized by the engraver of the Prussian court.

As Prince of Moldavia and Wallachia, Mavrocordatos' coat of arms is one of the first heraldic compositions reuniting both coats of arms of the two principalities used in printed books. Before this, the reunited coat of arms was only used in 1716 by Prince Racovita, and also by Nikolaos' father, Alexander Mavrocordatos, in his book *The Sacred History*.<sup>19</sup>



The Mavrocordatos crest reunites under the same crown, the arms of Wallachia and Moldavia, placed in two oval shields. An open crown with five fleurons is set on top.

Separately, the Wallachian coat of arms consists of an eagle, in front view position, its wings open and downward, and head turned to the left, standing with its feet on a mountain and holding in its beak a Latin cross placed vertically.

<sup>17</sup> Wake Letters, Vol.26, No.90, Christ Church Library.

<sup>18</sup> Nikolaos Maurokordatos, *Peri kathēkontōn biblos* [...] = *Liber de officiis conscriptus a piissimo, celsissimo atque sapientissimo principe ac duce totius Ungrovalachiae domino, domino Joanne Nicolao Alexandri Maurocordato Voivoda. Græce & Latine* [...] (Londini : Typis Samuelis Palmer, 1726).

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Maurokordatos, *Historia hiera, ētoi, Ta loudaika kat epitomēn syngraphenta* [...] (En Voukourestiō: Anthimos tou Ex Iverias, 1716).

The arms of Moldavia show a bull's head and a six-pointed star between its horns. Both the eagle and the bull are crowned. It should be noted that the star and crescent are missing in the Moldavian crest, but are present in the Wallachian one. The composition is flanked by two eagle supports, holding it up. It is also important to mention that the composition present in the printed books is not identical to the official coat of arms of Nikolaos Mavrocordatos. Initially, these reunited shields symbolised the fact that the owner was ruling both principalities. In the particular case of the Mavrocordatos family, they looked for the acknowledgement of their right to rule by virtue of their origins. Nikolaos' princely credentials (the result of intermarriage with Moldavian and Wallachian aristocracy) can be traced from his grandmother Cassandra, daughter of the Moldavian Prince Alexander Ilias. Furthermore, Cassandra's origins are pointing back to Petru Rares, who ruled Moldavia in the sixteenth century.

Due to the circulation of books in learned circles all around Europe, having the united shields printed in books would ultimately consolidate the cultural acknowledgment of the common origin of the two principalities.

### A Shared Passion: Numismatics

The correspondence between Jean Leclerc and Nikolaos Mavrocordatos reveals that books were not the only common interest shared by the Archbishop and the Prince. Both were passionate numismatists. A scholar, with wide and multiple spiritual interests, Nikolaos Mavrocordatos was one of the first numismatists of the two principalities.

In the process of learning Romanian, Nikolaos also became interested in Latin inscriptions, as well as Roman coins, that could often be found throughout the Danubian Principalities. As a result, the Prince acquired a huge collection of rare coins and medals. He realized the importance of the story coins can tell. On this particular subject, Bouchard quotes documents K 40e, K 40g et K 40p from the J. Clericus collection in the University of Amsterdam's Library. Here we find A. Epis, Mavrocordatos' secretary, writing to Lecrec to ask him for advice on a silver medal with Diana's effigy. He needed to do this, as he is not able to identify the item in the reference material in Mavrocordatos' library. The Prince was in possession of a huge number of beautiful medals, so Epis mentioned a few in his letter to Leclerc. He also sent a list of relevant titles and authors that he had managed to secure for Mavrocordatos' library, asking Leclerc to add to the Prince's collection any illustrated works on coins and Latin and Greek inscriptions that he might find missing. Following Epis' list, we noticed that all the authors can also be found in William Wake's



collection at Christ Church.<sup>20</sup> The presence of items from Epis' list in Christ Church Library could signal the fact that both collectors were aware of the most important publications in the field of numismatics at the time.

Apart from the letters mentioned above, there are many other relevant documents in the Library of Amsterdam University. Among these are lists of books sent by Leclerc to Mavrocordatos, lists of authors specialising in numismatics sent by Epis to Leclerc, and wishlists where Leclerc marked the items bought for the Prince. Add to this the research of scholars such as Nicolae Iorga, Constantin Dima Drăgan and Andrei Pippidi. Together, all the aforementioned sources create a rich corpus of data on both Mavrocordatos' books and his coin and medal collections.

This article is focused on the Prince's book collections, while drawing attention to the possibility of a future comparative study discussing the libraries of Nikolaos Mavrocordatos and William Wake.

One of the main objectives was to establish the provenance of an intriguing series of books published in Iași and Bucharest during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These books are now in the Wake collection at Christ Church. Most of these were gifts from Nikolaos Mavrocordatos and Hrisant Nottara, but they came from other sources as well.

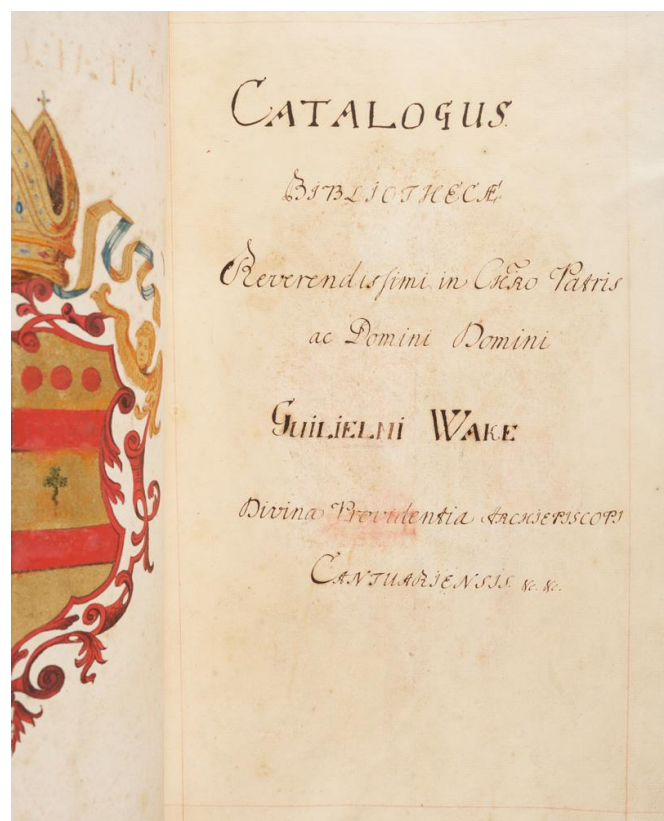
A possible reason for the presence of East European publications in the Wake collections might be the fact that in this period the Anglican church showed considerable interest in, and was exploring the possibility of a rapprochement with the Greek Orthodox church, in the quest of new theological arguments against their common enemy, at the time, the Catholic church.

Quoting Jesse Torgerson once again, one can ask: "Is it more accurate to consider the collecting activities of William Wake as those of an early 18<sup>th</sup> century "antiquarian" or "scholar"? The volumes of letters addressed to William Wake collected at

Christ Church Library contain correspondence that would seem to indicate both.<sup>21</sup>

The same conclusion is to be drawn for Nikolaos Mavrocordatos. Both collections were the result of not merely a bibliophilic interest, but the profound intellectual necessity due to their passion for knowledge and the quest for answers to political and religious questions in an intellectual climate of erudition. Both employed and sponsored scholars to look after their libraries. On one side, David Wilkins was employed for decades as Wake's librarian at Lambeth Palace and Walker, trained as a classical scholar, was more often employed on tasks of textual criticism. This is nowhere more concisely exemplified than in the 1620 Geneva edition of the New Testament housed in Christ Church Library as MS 35. In 1732, John Walker used no less than 8 New Testament manuscripts in the Archbishop's collection.<sup>22</sup>

In the same way, Stephan Bergler, educated in Leipzig as a classical scholar and historian, was employed by Nikolaos Mavrocordatos as librarian and his private secretary as well. Tellingly, "Oxford libraries, Christ Church in particular, hold a respectable number of books translated, edited, or prepared for print by Stephan Bergler."<sup>23</sup>



Title page of the William Wake collections catalogue.  
Christ Church Library, LR 21.

<sup>20</sup> See Jacob Spon, *Recherches curieuses d'antiquité, : contenues en plusieurs dissertations, sur des medailles, bas-reliefs, statuës, mosaïques, & inscriptions antiques* (Lyon: 1683), Christ Church shelfmark Wq.4.3; *Epitome thesauri antiquitatum, hoc est, Imp. Rom. orientalium & occidentalium iconum, ex antiquis numismatibus quàm fidelissimè deliniatarum* (Lyon, 1553), Christ Church shelfmark Wq.4.5 and *Selectiorum numismatum, præcipue Romanorum, expositiones, : elegantibus nummorum ectypis, & indicibus necessariis instructæ* (Lyon: 1695) Christ Church shelfmark AG.54. One can assume that this volume was once part of Wake's collection as well., as there is a note W.G. Hiscock's hand on front free end paper, stating: "See W. Arc Inf C.3.27 [...]".

<sup>21</sup> Jesse W. Torgerson, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>23</sup> Ioana Costache, 'On Qualified Duty: The Renaissance Translator & Editor', *Christ Church Library Newsletter*, Volume 4, Issue 2 (,2008), p.13.

An Oxford man himself, the Archbishop was aware of the Oxonian values of heritage preservation, not just in terms of keeping his collections safe, but also using them as tools of education. Wake entrusted his printed books, manuscripts, coins and medals to the Library at Christ Church, and, as a result, his collections survived the centuries, almost untouched. He had the vision of building a 'New Library'. In fact, in a very real way, that Library grew around his collections.<sup>24</sup>

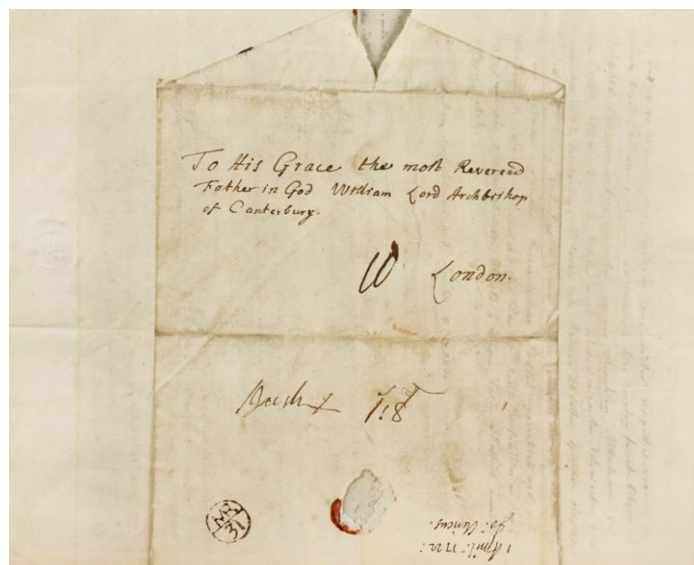
At the other end of the continent, Nikolaos Mavrocordatos established the huge monastic complex at Văcărești. This was designed to host a church, a royal residence, a printing press, a college and a library. It was one of the most magnificent complexes of this type in Eastern Europe, with its over 2500 square meters of brightly coloured frescoes. Sadly, fate was particularly cruel with Mavrocordatos' foundation.

His book collection was dismantled after his death in 1730. Although a bibliophile himself, his son, Constantin Mavrocordatos, sold many of its treasures in order to secure funds that could buy him the position of ruler in Wallachia and Moldavia from the Ottomans. He pawned his father's Istanbul library to Barker, an English merchant, who disposed of the entire collection after 1757. This is how two of the most important manuscripts once owned by Alexander Mavrocordatos the Exaporite made their way to the British Library. Unfortunately, the fame of the Mavrocordatos library helped its demise, as many European libraries were eager to acquire the treasures.<sup>25</sup> Things got even worse later. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the complex was turned into a prison, and finally, towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it felt prey to Ceaușescu's demolition madness. Some of the books donated by Nikolaos Mavrocordatos to the monastery he founded alongside in the Văcărești complex survived in the library of the Romanian Metropolitan Cathedral. Most of the volumes however, perished in 1989, in the devastating fire of the Central University Library in Bucharest. ... Fate could not have been more different for what were initially two very similar collections.

Alina Nachescu  
Christ Church

Alina is Photographic and Special Collections Assistant at Christ Church Library. In this role she captures and processes thousands of spectacular images, part of an extensive digitisation programme. Among her other duties are assisting with exhibitions, workshops and talks, and dealing with

copyright permissions. Alina holds a degree in French and Romanian from the West University, Timisoara, Romania. She benefitted from special photographic training arranged via the Bodleian Library. As a philologist, Alina is passionate about early printed books and manuscripts, and is currently researching the William Wake collections.



Envelope containing letter 64 from Leclerc to Wake, 22 September 1722. Wake Letters, Vol. 26,

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dan Ungureanu for the transcription and translation of some of the letters from William Wake's correspondence. Thanks also to Vera Tchentsova, whose work inspired this article.

## Further reading

Dan Cernovodeanu, *Știința și arta heraldică în România* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1977).

Sorin Ciutacu, 'The Loisirs of the Republic of Letters. John Locke in the Dutch-Romanian/Greek connection', *Dutch Crossing*, 32:1, 110-115, DOI: 10.1080/03096564.2008.11730913 (Accessed on 15 March 2021).

Veronica Cosovan, *Domnitori și steme românești : din colecțiile vechi de patrimoniu ale BNR* (Chișinău: Primex-Com, 2018).

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Maria Franchini, 'Archbishop Wake's Bequest to the Library', *Christ Church Library Newsletter*, Volume 1, Issue 3 (2005), pp.2-3.

Irmgard Hutter, *Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften*, vol.4.1, Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1993), p. xli.

Andrei Pippidi, *Documente privind locul românilor în Sud-Estul Europei* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2018).

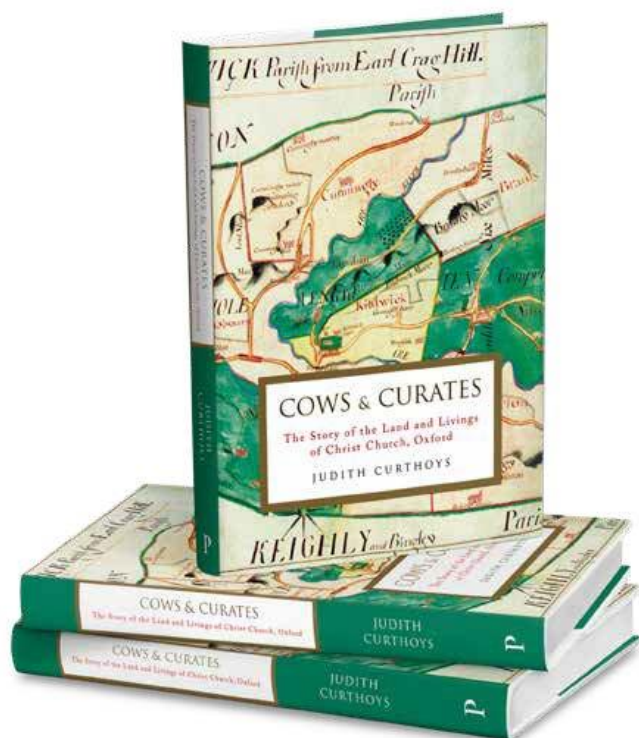
<sup>24</sup> To highlight the status of the Library at Christ Church, in his will, dated 12 February 1731, Wake stipulated that a Keeper should be appointed to care for the collections.

<sup>25</sup> See Constantin.Dima Drăgan, *Biblioteci umaniste românești* (București: Editura Litera, 1974), p. 57.



## New Publication

### *Cows and Curates: The Story of the Land and Livings of Christ Church, Oxford*



When Christ Church was founded in 1546, Henry VIII made the college a generous grant of land and other property. This endowment was large enough to ensure the smooth running of the college and cathedral including maintaining its buildings, educating its students and paying its staff. From earliest days up to the present, the endowment and later gifts - in all parts of the country, from Montgomeryshire to Norfolk and Cornwall to Yorkshire - have been managed with varying success, sometimes expertly, at other times less so. The shelves of the college archives are full of maps and plans, account books, manorial records, deeds, photographs and detailed correspondence with tenants and vicars. Drawing on this rich material, *Cows and Curates* recounts the history of the management of farms, urban dwellings, commercial property and industrial estates, as well as the relationship between the college and its incumbents, against the backdrop of national social change, legislation, agricultural developments and depressions, wars and modernisation.

This is the fourth book in the archivist's 'Christ Church Saga'.

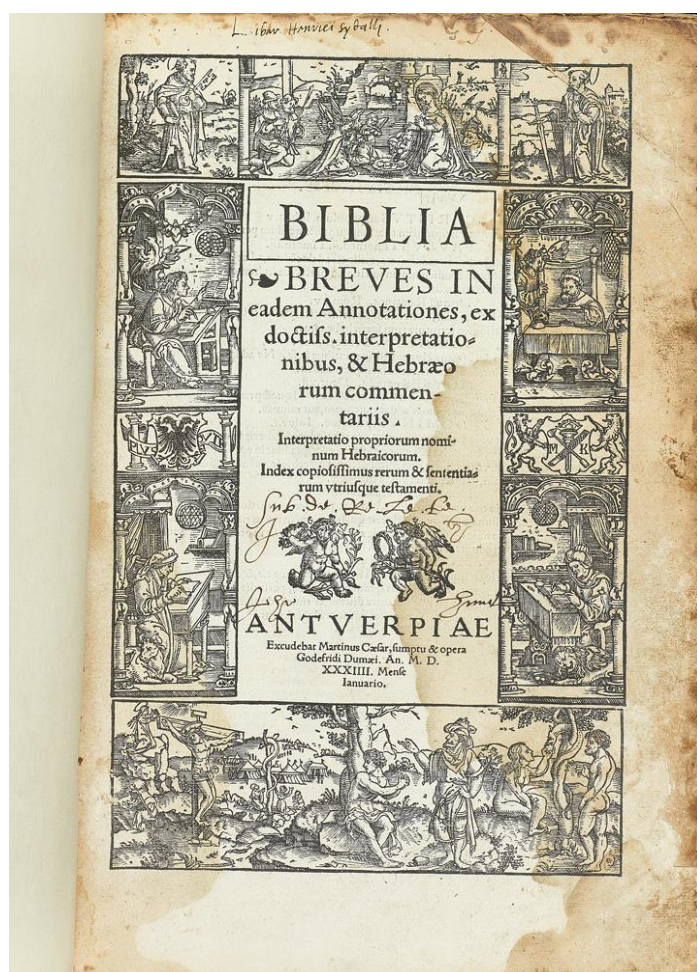
Available now in the Christ Church online shop. Alumni will enjoy 20% discount if they enter discount code 'OM20' at check out, or click on this link: <https://christ-church-university-shop.myshopify.com/discount/OM20>

Judith Curthoys  
Christ Church

Judith Curthoys has been Archivist at Christ Church since 1994. During this time she contributed articles to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and was co-editor of *Christ Church: A Portrait of the House* (2006). She is the author of *The Cardinal's College: Christ Church, Chapter and Verse* (2012) and *The Stones of Christ Church: The Story of the Buildings of Christ Church, Oxford* (2017). Her new book, *The King's Cathedral* was published in 2019.

## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS RECENT ACQUISITION

In late December, the Library purchased a copy of the *Biblia Breves in eadem Annotationes, ex doctiss. interpretationibus, & Hebraeorum commentariis* (Antwerp, 1534), in an auction that took place in Jerusalem.



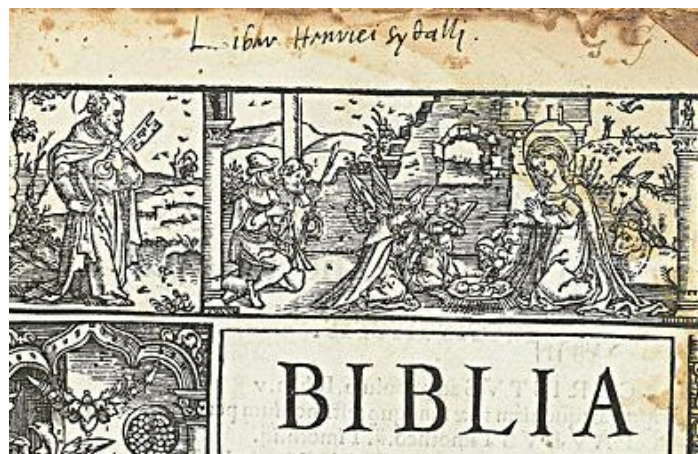
Title page of the newly acquired 1534 Antwerp Bible, with various marks of provenance.

The book is one of several editions of Robert Estienne's annotated Vulgate. In itself, the Estienne Vulgate is not rare. In fact, four various editions of



that Vulgate can be consulted in Oxford libraries, including another copy of this particular Antwerp print in Worcester College Library.

However, the provenance of the new Christ Church copy is of great interest to the history of the English Reformation, as it belonged to Henry Sydall (aka Sydal, or Siddall), who was a canon at Christ Church.



Christ Church copy of the 1534 Antwerp Bible, with the inscription 'Liber Henrici Sydalli' on the title page.

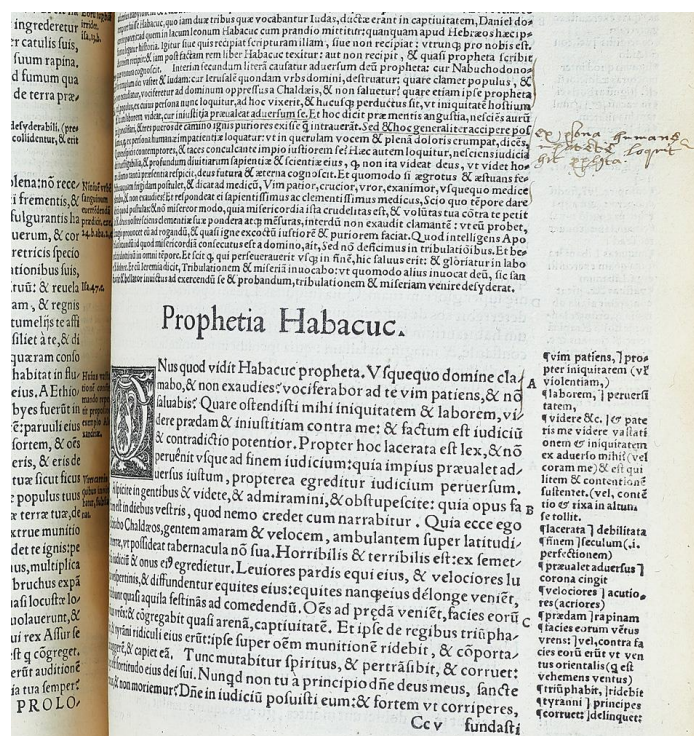
Another name that appears on the title page is John Hunt, possibly the Catholic lawyer who graduated from the college in 1528 (when it was still Cardinal College).<sup>1</sup> As the provenance of the book was not mentioned in the auction catalogue, it was a stroke of good luck that the book did not disappear into the darkness of a private collection for another generation or two.

We do not know when Henry Sydall was born, but his life is interwoven with the early history of Christ Church - from 1530, when we find him recorded as a petty canon in Cardinal College, through his appointment as canon in Christ Church in 1547, to 1571, when he died and was buried in the Cathedral.<sup>2</sup>

One of the few known details about him is that he zig-zagged his way religiously through the turbulent 1550s: he started the decade as an avid Protestant, conformed to Catholicism during Mary's reign and returned to Protestantism when Elizabeth ascended the throne.

History often frowns upon religious conformism of that kind and, indeed his name is often mentioned in

a negative context, in relation to the role that he played in the last few months of Thomas Cranmer's life. During his short Catholic period, Sydall was one of the witnesses to Cranmer's fifth recantation, a fact mentioned in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly, not all those who sympathized with the Reformation were as zealous as Cranmer, but the ease and the speed in which Sydall twice conformed was often seen as unusual by his contemporaries (a view that was adopted by later scholars as well).<sup>4</sup> As marginal a figure as Sydall may have been, he was involved in one of the most dramatic moments in the history of the early Anglican church, and his attempts to persuade Cranmer to conform to Catholicism, as well as his witnessing Cranmer's fifth recantation, make him a part of one of the tragic and formative stories of the church. Henry Sydall, like others who disputed with Cranmer when he was held in Christ Church during his last months, or like others who were signed as witnesses on his recantations, was an experienced theologian. They were all well-read and many of them held book collections and libraries. The contents of those libraries may shed light on their views on theology, as unstable as these views might have been. As I described above, the acquisition is an edition of Estienne's annotated Vulgate of 1528, where Estienne first demonstrated his critical use of manuscript sources and his critical treatment of old Hebrew terms and verse divisions. This approach, which echoed his own turn to Calvinism around those years, was to become a hallmark of his printing catalogue.



Annotated page, possibly in Sydall's hand in the Christ Church copy of the Antwerp 1534 Bible

<sup>1</sup> 'Hunt, John', in *The History of Parliament*, URL: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/hunt-john-1514-86>, (Accessed on 25 December 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, E. I., and Andrew A. Chibi. "Siddall, Henry (d. 1572), Church of England clergyman." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. January 03, 2008. Oxford University Press. (Accessed on 25 December. 2020),

<sup>3</sup> John Foxe, *The Acts and Monumentes of the Church* (London, 1563), p 1567.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2003), 195–196.

Sydall's copy also contains several manuscript annotations that may shed even more light on his approach to the scriptures and, indirectly, on matters of faith as well.

On a personal note, I should admit - I am not a Reformation scholar. So, I will not be the one who will be able to extract from this exemplar the wealth of historical facts contained therein.

But it only makes sense that future scholars who venture to understand the drama that took place inside Christ Church during the winter of 1555–56, will consult the college library, and that library is therefore the proper place for Sydall's Bible. Scholars must be able to understand the intellectual worlds of theologians like Sydall beyond what they are reported to have said in *The Acts and Monuments*. Reconstructing their libraries is a good starting point for that purpose.

Perhaps Sydall's image as a spineless opportunist will be revised? Perhaps the unflattering account from his short Catholic phase covers a man who desperately tried to save Cranmer, knowing that his window of opportunity - Cranmer's short stay in Christ Church and not in Bocardo Prison - was limited and required swift action? Two years prior, it was again Sydall who was put in charge of Peter Martyr's security when the latter was held in house arrest and awaited an opportunity to leave Marian England to Straßburg.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps behind Sydall's religious infirmity hid a man who was, first and foremost, a good friend.

*Alon Schab*  
University of Haifa

Dr Schab is a composer, musicologist and recorder player teaching at the University of Haifa. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the compositional technique of Henry Purcell, in Trinity College Dublin. He is a committee member of the Purcell Society and the chair of the Israel Musicological Society.

He is the author of a book on Purcell's trio sonatas (University of Rochester Press, 2018) and a book on transcribing, editing and arranging for early music performers (forthcoming from Oxford University Press).

## Rare Bibles, Surprising Provenance and the 1676 Bodleian Book Auction

There is a huge number of rare Bibles scattered among the Special Collections at Christ Church. Some of these are unique items, which, apart from their intrinsic value, have also notable provenance, often changing many hands in their long history. Like most books the past owners of which can be easily traced through signatures or annotations, these are volumes usually set apart not only through their contents, but also the circumstance of their production and magnificence. One thing most of these Bibles have in common is that their last in a series of owners left them specifically to the library at Christ Church.

It may sound surprising now, but the College did not have a Library to start with. It took many years for it to be established, grow and, ultimately, impress the world with its grandeur, size and quality. However, although he did not get a chance to do more about it, it was Wolsey himself who actively sought out books which could have been intended for the Library designed for his Foundation. Two letters from Girolamo Ghinucci (bishop of Worcester 1522-35), operating as the cardinal's agent in Italy, describe efforts to procure the most high-profile humanist books at the time. At the stage the letters chronicle, Ghinucci was obtaining transcripts of the catalogues of Venice's Biblioteca Marciana and of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. From these, Wolsey was expected to prepare a wish-list to stock his library. In many cases, this would have involved arranging for purchases of new volumes. A second letter, accompanied by a (now lost) catalogue of the Marciana, suggests that acquisition from the holdings of the Italian libraries may have been contemplated and possible.<sup>1</sup>

Wolsey's great plan did not come to fruition, and, almost one hundred years passed from the moment he fell from grace and lost everything he had struggled to build, until Christ Church Library started to find its feet. It was only from the 1620s into the early 1640s that we can first speak of a relatively steady influx of volumes meant to put together a collection more or less customised for study.

It was in this period that two of the institution's oldest Bibles, and a Wycliffite 'New' Bible arrived. These had been preceded by a beautifully preserved manuscript dated 1167 of Augustine's Homilies on John. This

<sup>5</sup> M. A. Overell, "Peter Martyr in England 1547-1553: An Alternative View", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 15/1 (Spring, 1984), pp. 87–104 (101).

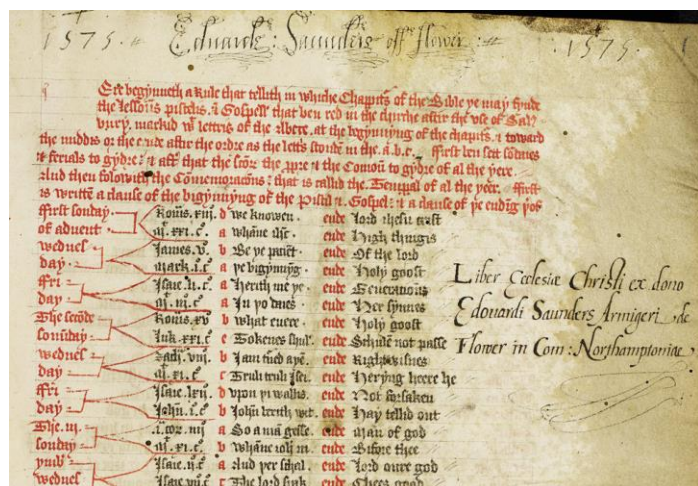
<sup>1</sup> For details, please see James Willoughby, 'Thomas Wolsey and the Books of Cardinal College, Oxford', *Bodleian Library Record*, Volume 28, Number 2 (2015), pp. 114-134.; and *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts to c. 1600, in Christ Church, Oxford*, ed. by David Rundle and Ralph Hanna (Oxford: 2017), pp. 28-29.



codex (MS 88)<sup>2</sup> was produced for, and, before its arrival to Christ Church, belonged to Buildwas Abbey. A few other medieval manuscripts reached the library as well, but, at this stage, no two codices came from the same donor. In its history, this library was at the receiving end of significantly large collections, such as those bequeathed by Robert Burton, Henry Aldrich, Charles Boyle the 4th Earl of Orrery, and William Wake. These, however, will not be the topic of the present article. Instead, let us, for a moment, look at the countless small donations, the lone volumes, arriving mostly on their own, and see what stories they can tell.

From among the Wycliffite Bibles in the Christ Church collection, MS 145<sup>3</sup> stands apart, as it contains one of the best witnesses for the early versions of the English translation. This early 14th century manuscript is also notable for its unusual page design, running titles for biblical books written in alternating blue and red ink, split across the opening. This is perfectly normal in copies of the Latin Vulgate Bible (such as, for instance, a series of 13th century Christ Church manuscripts among which are MS 105, MS 106, MS 110 and MS 111), but is very rare in the Wycliffite Bible corpus.

MS 145, this imposing and textually important volume, was the very first Western manuscript given to Christ Church Library. Browsing it with a view to discover notes of previous ownership, we are really spoilt for choice. In his description of the manuscript, David Rundle provides us with a full page of detailed information and analysis on provenance and early readership.<sup>4</sup>

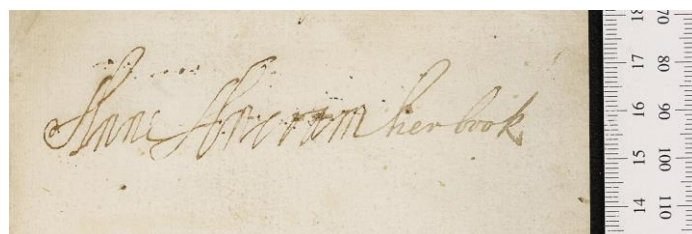


Provenance notes in MS 145, fol.1r.

We are first directed to the signature of Edward Saunders, clearly visible at fol.iii v (beneath an earlier pair of Latin verses) and at the upper margin of fol.1r. He is the one who bequeathed the manuscript to Christ Church, for below, in the margin of the same page, there is also a note by a contemporary hand stating 'Liber Ecclesiae Christi ex dono Edouardi Saunders Armigeri de Flower in Com: Northamptoniae'. The volume was donated by Edward Saunders, probably in 1586 when he graduated from Christ Church with his MA. The codex had previously been given to his father by Robert Clay, vicar of Flore, 1570-79. There is an irony in the donation of this volume to the Library. As an educational establishment, Christ Church was expected to be fully Latin-speaking, with penalties for lapsing into the vernacular. However, its ecclesiastical status meant that English would be heard every day in its chapel. This very fact might explain the rather unexpected donation of a Wycliffite Bible to an Oxford college.

For many years after Edward Saunders gave this important manuscript to his Alma Mater, such grand acts of generosity appear to be few and far between. Judging from the Donors' Register (MS LR1),<sup>5</sup> the first flush of enthusiasm for recording gifts subsided and lists become less well-organised from the early 1620s. It is only from the 1650s onwards, that the records once again become more detailed.

The Donors' Register for 1654 is particularly interesting. Apart from recording a John Evelyn's visit during his tour of Oxford in the summer, and a sudden influx of names, it also confirms the provenance of one of the most treasured volumes in Christ Church collections, namely, the calligraphic manuscript of the Book of Psalms by Esther Inglis (MS 180)<sup>6</sup>.



Provenance note on the flyleaf of MS 180.

Similar to the note at the top of the first flyleaf (fol.i) which states 'Anne Ancram her book', the Register mentions that the manuscript was given to Christ Church by Anne, wife of the Earl of Ancram:

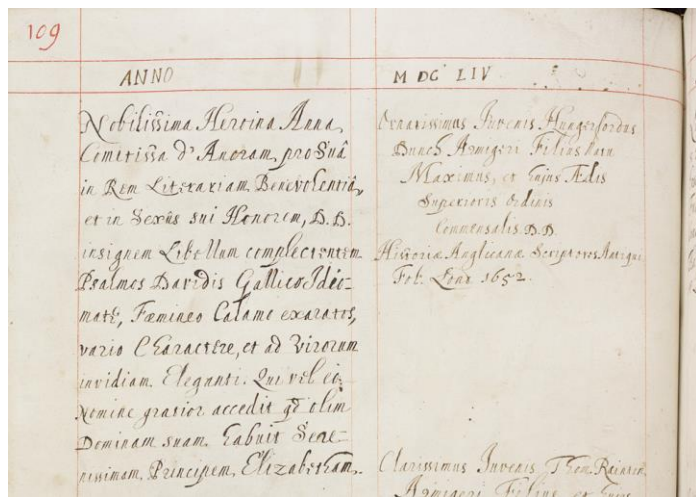
<sup>2</sup> MS 88 has been digitised. See <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/10aaf6ea-9b80-4eae-a2a4-291016317827>.

<sup>3</sup> MS 145 has been digitised. See <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/4b61db42-3ac8-4973-8ae6-d404cb7f89c2>

<sup>4</sup> A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts to c. 1600, pp. 309-31.

<sup>5</sup> The Donors' Register has been digitised. See <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/b56c5758-b86a-4101-a559-69129ae7b30d>

<sup>6</sup> MS 180 has been digitised. See <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/9c90861e-1944-46b4-bc20-e9f5affd6f3c>



Reference to Anne, Countess of Ancram in the Donors Register (LR 1), fol. 109.

At first sight, there is nothing special about Anne. But, digging a little deeper into her biography, we come across a compelling story. Anne was the only daughter of William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby, by Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Edward Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. She first married Sir Henry Portman of Orchard Portman, Somerset, who died 21 February 1621, and, at the end of the same year, she took as her second husband Robert Kerr, who was made 1st Earl of Ancram. As a royalist, the earl went into exile following the execution of Charles I and died in Amsterdam in December 1654. Anne remained in Britain and was buried at Westminster Abbey in 1657.

In the year her husband died, the Countess presented this spectacular Book of Psalms to Christ Church. It is not entirely clear what occasioned the donation.

However, if we take into account who may have been the original owner, there could be certain logic to Anne's gift, for it is none other than Queen Elizabeth I whose name is noted on the front pastedown. At the top, later deleted, one can still read 'this booke was giuen to Queene Elizabeth', and at the centre: 'This book was queen Elizabeths'.



Provenance note on front pastedown of MS 180.

So, since this exquisite volume was produced for a monarch, it may have been a conscious political symbolism, for the Countess of Ancram, the wife of a well-known royalist, to be giving a book with royal connections to an institution known for its continuing royalist loyalties.

The text for this volume containing the Book of Psalms is the French translation provided in the 1588 edition of the Geneva Bible.<sup>7</sup> As is made clear in its opening leaves, the manuscript was produced by Esther Inglis, one of the finest calligraphers of the period. She completed it in March 1599 in Edinburgh. Without any doubt, the volume was meant to be a gift to the Queen. The Book of Psalms was not the only work Esther finished that year. There were four other manuscripts, two intended for English recipients, Anthony Bacon (1558-1601), now in the British Library, MS Add. 27927, and Bacon's patron, Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex (1565-1601), now in the Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 990, as well as one destined for Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange (1567-1625), now in the Folger Library, MS V.a.93. The manuscript at Christ Church (presumably along with these others) was taken to England by Esther's husband, Bartholomew Kello. The plan was to present the manuscripts, together with a letter of recommendation from James VI, King of Scotland, to their intended owners.<sup>8</sup>

What occasioned this exquisite gift by the calligrapher to the Queen of England is as open to debate as the reason behind the donation of the same volume, by Anne, Countess of Ancram, to Christ Church. However, in the absence of relevant notes and documents to add further details to the story, this is a manuscript the beauty of which itself, if perused carefully, can reveal a great deal on its own.

To start with, the calligraphy is fabulous, almost superhuman, with Esther demonstrating an innate ability to construct a script as constant as print can offer, and to move, almost endlessly, from one script to another. There are about seventeen different scripts present in this volume, in two to four different sizes. The beauty and originality of the scripts is further enhanced by the charm and elegance of the decoration. Each textblock is set within a delicately illuminated frame, and each psalm is preceded and followed by an ornamental bar of varying designs, including sea monsters, grotesques and a variety of animals. There are also two inhabited initials. The volume opens with a frieze of foliage and grapes, in the centre of which is a crowned lady flanked by a lion and a stag. The lady's left arm embraces the stag's neck. As the design faithfully reproduces the headpiece of the 1588 Geneva Bible (sig. \*ij), this discreetly points to a link between Esther Inglis' volume and the volume which served as the text source she opted for.

<sup>7</sup> See *La Bible, qui est toute la Sainte Esriture du Vieil & du Nouveau Testament*, translated by Théodore de Bèze and Clément Marot (Geneva, 1588). Shelfmark for the copy at Christ Church; OA.5.1.

<sup>8</sup> For further details on provenance, see *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts to c. 1600*, pp. 353-354.





Ornamental bar in the 1588 Geneva Bible.



Ornamental bar inspired by the headpiece in the 1588 Geneva Bible by Esther Inglis in MS 180.

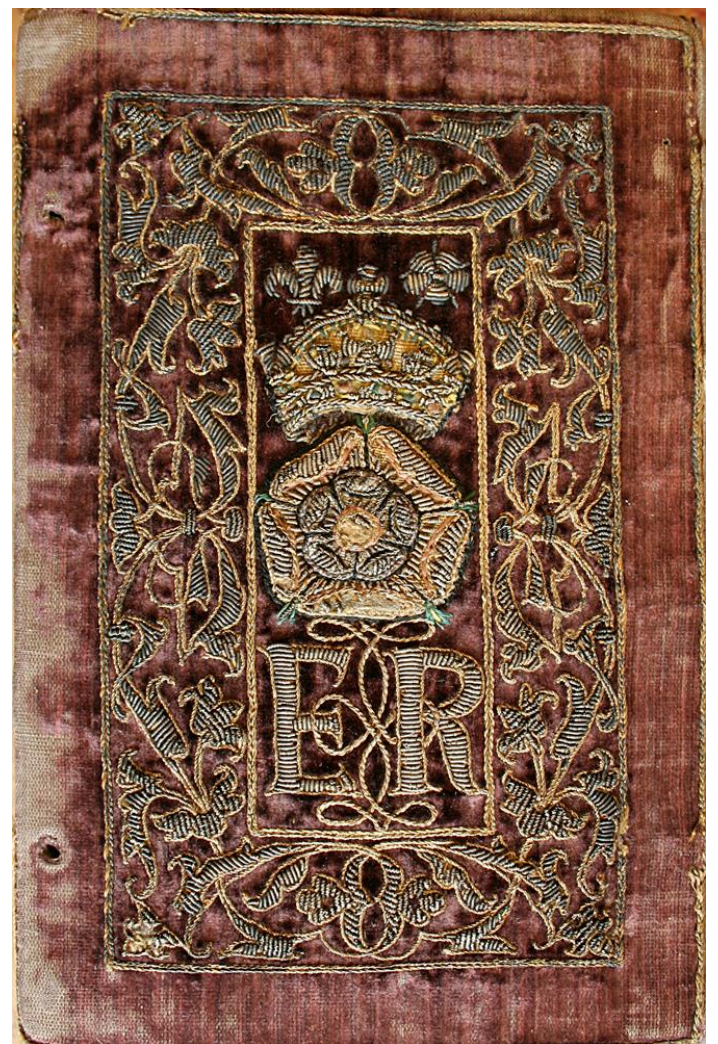
The astonishing beauty of the calligraphy is not the only memorable feature here. The covers are spectacular as well. Bound with embroidered pink velvet over pasteboards made from re-used paper, the book is a work of art. The embroidery is thought to be by Esther Inglis herself. The needlework is in silver, green and gold thread, and pearls. Unsurprisingly, as the volume was meant as a gift to the Queen, the design for the binding depicts a crowned Tudor Rose, surrounded by a laurel garland, within a border of flower motifs.

So, even without any of the clues offered by the presence of incidental annotations, this manuscript stands out, and its striking, well thought through beauty guides the reader to discover its story. For nothing in its decoration is accidental or gratuitous. And by looking at it carefully, letting the book speak to us, we not only get to meet the artist who created it, but also the person for whom this volume was produced.

We learn about the Queen's assumed exquisite taste, her interest in languages and passion for study (Esther gives her a manuscript in French, the text of which is borrowed from a specific recently issued edition of the Bible). Thus, the book is, in a way, a portrait of the Queen, seen through the eyes of the calligrapher.

A similar type of embroidered binding encases the 1545 parallel edition of the "Vulgate / Zürich Latin

Bible".<sup>9</sup> The copy at Christ Church must have initially been presented to Queen Elizabeth I, as, like Esther Inglis' Book of Psalms, this volume is bound in red velvet over paste-boards, decorated in gold and silver thread with a border. There is no doubt as to who the original owner was, as the Queen's initials are embroidered in a cartouche. Also, an exquisitely illuminated title page with the royal arms and the name of the publisher - Robert Estienne - was glued over the original title page. The latter, showing the simple all-caps word "Biblia" printed within a decorative woodcut frame below which is a version of the Estienne printer's device, is not accessible at present. Conservators are currently examining the Christ Church copy with a view to assess whether it would be possible to retrieve the printed title page from beneath the parchment of the one decorated for the Queen.



Binding of the Christ Church copy of the 1545 Bible.

What happened to this rare and beautiful book from the moment it left the royal library until it arrived here, how many hands it passed through, all these are questions yet to be answered.

<sup>9</sup> *Biblia : Quid in hac editione praestitum sit, vide in ea quam operi praeposuimus, ad lectorem epistola [...]* (Lutetiae.: Ex officina Roberti Stephani, typographi Regij, 1545). Christ Church shelfmark MS 409.

Unlike the previous manuscripts discussed, this volume does not bear any annotations or written marks of provenance, other than the Christ Church bookplate linking it to the Allestree collection. This fact in itself is significant and tells an interesting story, as the location of the volume is in a separate library bequeathed by Richard Allestree in 1681 for the use of the Regius Professor of Divinity and his successors. As it stands, the collection was meant to provide a base for teaching and research.

Taking this fact into account, the presence of this particular book in Richard Allestree's library is not surprising. The 1545 edition is particularly important as it contains both the Vulgate version and that of the "Zürich Bible" in parallel columns. The Zürich Latin version was a translation from the Hebrew by Leo Juda and Theodorus Bibliander. The Apocrypha was translated by Pierre Cholin. The New Testament was a revision of Erasmus' version prepared by Rudolf Gualter. The accompanying commentary was adapted from lectures by François Vatable, with Robert Estienne's revisions.

These new translations at the side of the Vulgate, were the subject of sharp and acrimonious controversy. It is for the first time that the Catholic Vulgate and the Protestant Zürich Bible (first published by Froschauer in 1543)<sup>10</sup> appeared together. This in itself is a profoundly meaningful statement, a plea from an enlightened and courageous publisher for unity and reason. Also, the fact that the Protestant version chosen by Robert Estienne is not in the expected vernacular cannot pass unnoticed. Why, we might ask, did Protestants invest significant intellectual and financial resources in the production of Latin Bibles? The answer, according to Bruce Gordon,<sup>11</sup> requires us to understand the enduring importance of Latin for the Reformation churches. While it might no longer have been regarded as a sacred language, no one could deny that it continued to be the means by which the fruits of Hebrew and Greek scholarship could be conveyed to a broader audience.

To conclude, this unique item is a very rare scholarly edition of the Bible. The copy now at Christ Church started its life in Queen Elizabeth's possession. Later, it somehow found its way to Oxford, and was acquired by Richard Allestree for his library, proving to be desirable not only as a beautiful object with an

august provenance, but it also provided an important base for teaching and research.

The few manuscripts selected for discussion so far were from among the better-known treasures of the Library. They are striking and priceless through their beauty, value for research and their provenance. One thing all these have in common is that their last in a series of owners left them specifically to the Library at Christ Church. The next volume under scrutiny is not at all well-known and was definitely not bequeathed to Christ Church. Its story is altogether different, but equally revealing and exciting. And similar to the volumes discussed above, most of its story can be retrieved from the information provided by the object itself, by means of provenance and dedicatory notes, details related to the binding and miscellaneous other bits of data.

A closer look at the Christ Church copy of the so called 'Vizsoly Bible'<sup>12</sup> reveals a few note-worthy facts. This is the first Bible printed in Hungarian. It was translated by Gáspár Károli and printed in 1590. The sources of this translation are many. They are named in the foreword: the Vulgata, the Septuaginta, commentaries by Franciscus Vatablus, Sebastian Münster, Santes Pagninus and Immanuel Tremellius, plus earlier, incomplete Hungarian translations, mainly those by Gáspár Heltai and Péter Melius Juhász. Beyond all this however, Károli's translation is seminal for establishing Hungarian as a literary language. The printing of the Vizsoly Bible is also of utmost importance. It is an example of smooth European collaboration, with the press, based at Vizsoly, in Hungary, using paper from Poland and type pieces from the Netherlands. Bálint Mantskovit, a Polish typographer, coordinated the printing of a volume including 2,412 pages of text weighing about 6 kg. Fewer than 50 of the c.700 copies of the first edition of the Vizsoly Bible have survived.

The second edition is even scarcer, but a copy of this extremely rare book is now at Christ Church. The volume was printed at Hanau, Germany, in 1608. The copy now at Christ Church has a fascinating history. This can be reconstructed to a certain extent. Fortunately, there are several manuscript notes, so there is plenty of information available. Most importantly, we have two presentation inscriptions. One, on a piece of paper glued to the upper board, in Latin. The other, on a similar looking piece of paper, but this time glued to the lower board, in Hungarian. Both are written in the same elegant humanistic hand.

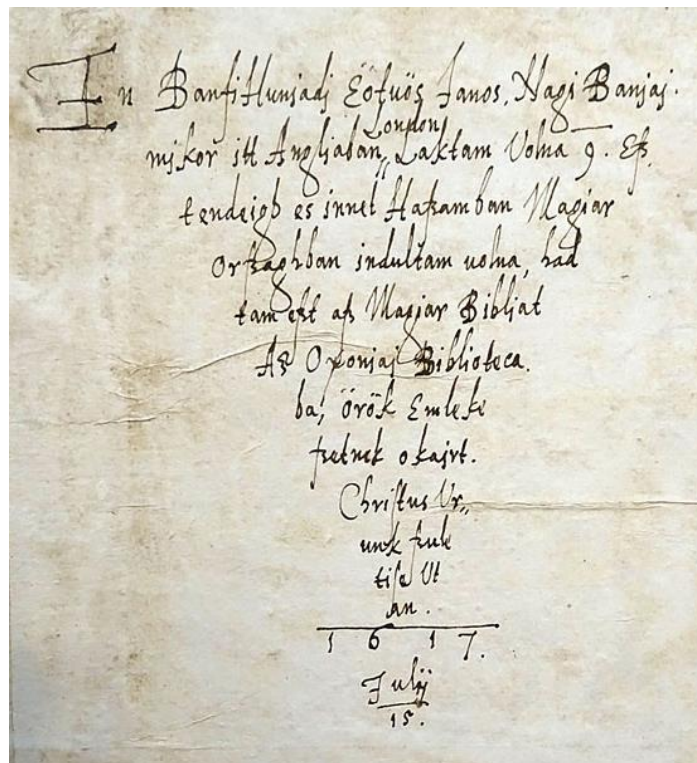
<sup>10</sup> *Biblia sacrosancta testamenti veteris et novi e sacra Hebraeorum lingua Graecorumque fontibus, consultis simul orthodoxis interpretibus religiosissime translata in sermonem Latinum [...]* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1543).

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Gordon, 'Remembering Jerome and Forgetting Zwingli: The Zurich Latin Bible of 1543 and the Establishment of Heinrich Bullinger's Church', *Zwingliana* 41 (2014), pp. 1–33

<sup>12</sup> *Szent Biblia az az is tennec ô es uy Testamentomanac prophetac es apastoloc által megiratort szent könyvei. Magyar nyelvre fordítotai egészen, az Istennec Magyarorszagban valo anya szent Egyházának epülésére. Caroli Caspar Elöljárbeszédével* (Hanouiaban : nyomtattatott Halbejus Janos által, Levinus Hulzius, 1608). Christ Church shelfmark NA.5.2.



The Hungarian inscription describes a certain Bánfihunyadi János, born in NagyBánya (Baia Mare, Romania), giving the book to the Bodleian Library on 15 July 1617, so that he is remembered forever. The text also mentions the donor living in London for nine years at the time.

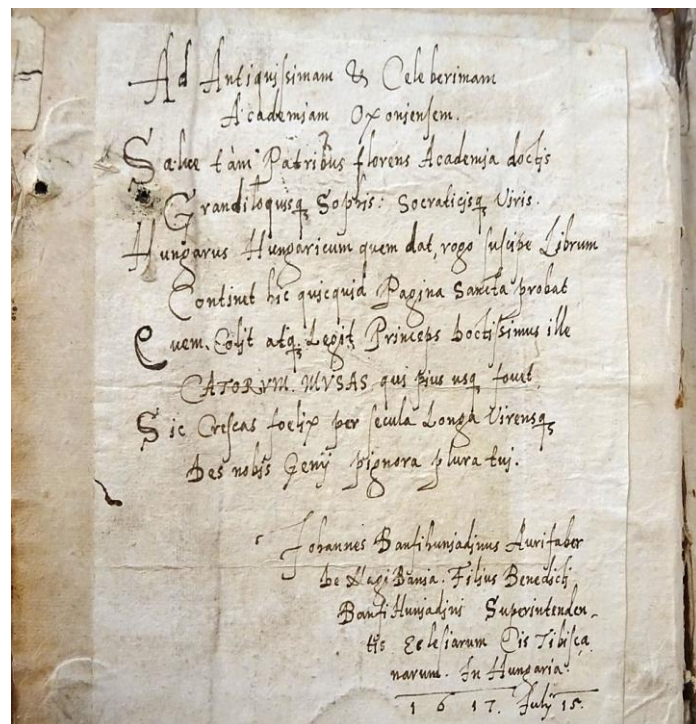


Inscription in Hungarian on the back pastedown of the Christ Church copy of 1608 edition of the Vizsoly Bible.

The Latin inscription starts with a poem, dedicating the volume to the University of Oxford - "Ad Antiquissimam & Celeberimam Academiam Oxoniensem [...]". At the end there is a short text giving some biographical information on the donor, by his Latinised name, Johannes Banfihuniadinus, the son of Benedict, minister supervising the Protestant churches in the region of Tiszántúl.

So, who is this Bánfihunyadi János / Johannes Banfihuniadinus? He gives us the most important clue as to his identity, both in Hungarian and Latin: he describes himself as "Eötvös" / "Aurifaber", meaning "goldsmith". Starting from here, one can quickly confirm that the man who donated this rare Bible to the Bodleian is none other than a well-respected Hungarian alchemist, also known by his pseudonym Hans Hungar (1576-1646). He appears to have been truly popular and highly regarded during his lifetime, for five portraits, one of them kept in the National Portrait Gallery, have been identified. Four are engravings seemingly based on a lost painting by Jacob Peter Gowy (three by Wenceslaus Hollar, all dated to 1644, and one by William Marshall, dated 1646). The fifth is a small silver medallion struck in 1645. The engraved portraits show a bearded figure holding a glass vessel enclosed within a frame of alchemical instruments,

symbols and quotations, revealing the sitter's name and birthplace.



Inscription in Latin on the front pastedown of the Christ Church copy of the 1608 edition of the Vizsoly Bible.

There are accounts of Bánfihunyadi leaving the Kingdom of Hungary for a European tour in 1606. The inscription in the Hungarian Bible kept at Christ Church reveals that he arrived in England in 1608. Here he is documented to have associated with figures such as the alchemist Arthur Dee (John Dee's son), William Lilly, Jonathan Goddard and Kenelm Digby. Though fully active and happily married in England, Bánfihunyadi kept in touch with his Hungarian roots not only by corresponding with scholars such as Medgyesi Pál and Haller Gábor, but even by occasionally travelling back to his native land. Thus, in *Arcana Arcanorum*, Arthur Dee mentions sending a friend to Hungary to collect some "prima materia" for his alchemical work. Given their documented connection, this friend is very likely to have been Bánfihunyadi himself. Moreover, we needn't look further than the copy of the Hungarian Bible in hand to see that the book happened to be a parting gift. In the provenance note at the end of the book the donor mentions that he was soon to be on his way back to his home in Hungary. Scrutinising the book, with all its bibliographic information and marginalia, is an endlessly rewarding exercise. The edition Bánfihunyadi gave to the Bodleian Library was published in Hanau, near Frankfurt, in 1608. This is precisely the time when the alchemist would have been crossing Germany. The book was completed in the principality of Kassel under the patronage of its ruler, Landgrave Maurice of Hesse, whose many scholarly attributes included a mastery of the Hungarian language. Tellingly, in dedicating his copy to Oxford University, the Latin autograph

inscription at the beginning of the volume refers to Maurice's fluency in Hungarian, patronage of the arts and his status as a "princeps doctissimus", whose court was one of the greatest centres of alchemy in Europe. Its links with England were surprisingly close. The godmother of Maurice's daughter was Queen Elizabeth and Maurice himself claimed kinship with Elizabeth's successor, King James I. Interestingly, the latter is also part of the story that this particular item tells. His presence looms large in this striking copy of the Bible in Hungarian. The volume is set in a seventeenth-century calf binding, with gold-tooled armorials of King James I, the date 1617, and the initials "H \* I \* NB". The initials stand for "Hunyadinus \* Iohannes \* NagyBánya". This suggests that the donor also had the book bound before inscribing it as a gift to the Bodleian Library.



Arms on the binding of the Christ Church copy of the 1608 edition of the Vizsoly Bible.

Bánfihunyadi's presence in Oxford may be explained by a possible meeting with Thomas Allen, a mathematician, astrologer and Fellow of Gloucester Hall. Allen is also known as an important collector. At least 250 items from his library can still be traced. He is particularly remembered as having acquired manuscripts from dissolved monasteries. A considerable part of Allen's collection was presented to the Bodleian Library by Kenelm Digby (with whom Bánfihunyadi collaborated extensively). This bequest was strong in works by early English scientists, including Roger Bacon, Simon Bredon, John Eschenden, Robert Grosseteste, John Sharp, and Richard Wallingford. Allen's library was in extensive use during his lifetime, with many of its holdings in circulation among scholars. One of the items from Allen's library is documented to have reached William Lilly (another famous astrologer of the period) from Bánfihunyadi. There is a plausible chance therefore that the Hungarian alchemist met Thomas Allen directly and benefited from the latter's library during a visit to Oxford. This visit could have

happened in July 1617, when Bánfihunyadi gave his rare Bible to the Bodleian. Its presence there is attested by the shelfmark - Arch B.77 - on the flyleaf, as it appears in the old Bodleian catalogue. What happened and why the volume is no longer there, this is another story. It appears that the Bodleian Library at the time had another copy of the second edition of the Vizsoly Bible. This is lost now, but because there were two copies initially and possibly because the volume donated by Bánfihunyadi had annotations, therefore did not look as new, it might have been disposed of as duplicate. Most likely, it was sold by the Bodleian Library in the 1676 auction. At that sale there is reason to believe that Christ Church was a considerable purchaser. Further research is currently under way in connection to the Bodleian sale of duplicates in the hope that we might discover other titles acquired by the college. Until then, the handsome presentation copy of this rare edition has found its home at Christ Church under a new shelfmark - NA.5.2. Far from spoiling its beauty and value, the manuscript notes placed inside by a careful donor have given the book a voice and the ability to tell a story and thus reach its readers in the future in a very tangible way. It is exactly as Bánfihunyadi wished it to be, a volume meant to remind us of his presence forevermore...

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Christ Church

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## Christ Church Library Newsletter

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