

THE COLLINS BIBLE

BY RICHARD F. HIXSON

Mr. Hixson, a professor of communication in Rutgers College, is editor of the *Journal*. This article is excerpted from his *Isaac Collins: A Quaker Printer in 18th Century America* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1968).

THE career of Isaac Collins constitutes an important part of the early history of printing, publishing, and journalism in the Middle States. From his presses in Philadelphia, Burlington and Trenton, New Jersey, and New York City, in the years 1770 to 1808, came some of the finest specimens of American printing. He was foremost a book publisher and bookseller, but he also published a Revolutionary newspaper and served as New Jersey's official government printer for several years. Many of his imprints, as well as those of other early New Jersey printers, are on file in the Special Collections Department of the Rutgers University Library.

Collins, a member of the Society of Friends, issued many Quaker tracts and histories as well as numerous books about other faiths; however, he was equally well known as the publisher of outstanding works on slavery, education, American history, and medicine. His greatest single achievement as publisher and craftsman was his 1791 edition of the King James Bible, the second quarto edition to be printed in America. To this work Collins brought all the skills of an eminent master printer and typographer, but in his solid concern for a definitive text he enlisted the aid not only of the Friends but of prominent Episcopalians, Baptists, and Presbyterians, including Dr. John Witherspoon of Princeton. The Collins Bible, two copies of which are in the Rutgers Library, still commands the admiration of scholars and fine printers.

No Bible in the English language had been printed in America during the colonial period. There were, however, Bibles in other tongues. The first to be printed in America was the Indian Bible, translated by Rev. John Eliot and printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1663 by Samuel Green and Marmaduke Johnson. The first Bible printed in a European language (German) was issued in 1743 by Christopher Sower of Germantown. The first English Bible in

America was printed in Philadelphia in 1781-82 by Robert Aitken, a long-time business acquaintance of Collins who had issued an English New Testament in 1777. The first American edition of the Roman Catholic Rheims-Douai version was printed by Mathew Carey of Philadelphia in 1790.¹

Isaiah Thomas, who printed the first volume of his famous folio Bible and also a complete quarto edition in 1791, the same year that Collins printed his, recalled that in his Philadelphia days Collins had earned twenty-five per cent higher wages than other journeymen for his "extraordinary attention to business."² In a letter to a friend, David Ramsay said: "Though Collins printed the revolution of South Carolina from rather a worse manuscript than Aitkin [sic] has printed the American revolution he has not committed as many errors in the whole two volumes as Aitkin has in many single pages. Aitkins work offends against every principle of good printing."³

New Jersey's Governor William Livingston also had a good word for Collins. A year before the printer announced his proposals for publishing the Bible, Livingston wrote: "I have had abundant proof of the accuracy and correctness of his publications, as well as his remarkable attention to business."⁴

Before starting his quarto Bible Collins published four, possibly five, editions of the New Testament. Until 1951, the year George C. Rockefeller, a New Jersey bibliographer, reported his discovery of a 1779 New Testament printed by Collins, it was thought that the first New Jersey Testament bore the date of 1788. In 1899 another bibliographer, William Nelson, listed an edition for 1780, but admitted that he had taken his information from a newspaper advertisement and had not viewed an actual copy of the volume.

¹ For the history of Bible publishing in early America see Margaret T. Hills, *The English Bible in America* (New York, 1961); Edwin A. R. Runball-Petre, *America's First Bibles* (Portland, Me., 1940); P. Marion Simms, *The Bible in America: Versions That Have Played Their Part in the Making of the Republic* (New York, 1936); John Wright, *Early Bibles in America* (New York, 1894); and Randolph G. Adams, "America's First Bibles," *The Colophon*, New Series I (Summer, 1935).

² Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, 2nd ed. (Albany, 1874), I, 316.

³ Letter from Ramsay to Rev. Ashbel Green, Philadelphia, October 4, 1790, Boston Public Library, from a copy made by Carol Spawn of Philadelphia. Collins had printed Ramsay's two-volume *History of the Revolution in South-Carolina* in 1785, the manuscript for which amounted to six hundred pages, quarto-size.

⁴ Livingston to Collins, September 11, 1788, reproduced in the printer's proposals, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

Rockefeller also reported a 1782 edition printed by Collins.⁵ In any event, what must have been the 1779 edition was first advertised in the *New-Jersey Gazette* for March 29, 1780: "A new edition of the New-Testament, Spelling-books, Primers, Parchment, and Writing-Paper, To Be Sold by the Printer hereof." The next notice appeared in the *Gazette* for October 11 and was repeated throughout the rest of the year: "Just Published and to be Sold, wholesale and retail, by Isaac Collins, at the Printing-Office, in Trenton, a neat edition of THE NEW TESTAMENT, Printed in good type, and good paper." In addition to the New Testaments Collins issued in 1779, 1780, and 1782, he published two editions in 1788.

On December 19, 1789, Collins issued an attractive four-page pamphlet setting forth his proposals for printing by subscription "the Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments; with the Apocrypha and Marginal Notes." He promised a 984-page quarto volume, reprinted page for page from the Oxford edition and to include an index, a concordance, and assorted tables of measures, weights, and coins used in biblical times. The price to subscribers was set at four Spanish dollars, each roughly the equivalent of 7s. 6d. in the Middle States through the 1780's. As for the mode of payment, the printer stipulated: "One Dollar to be paid at the Time of subscribing, the Remainder on Delivery of the Book."

Relative to this public announcement is a personal letter Collins wrote to Governor Livingston on September 4, 1789, three months before the proposals were made public. It was written in response to Livingston's reaction to Collins's New Testament of 1788 and suggests a possible motive for the printer's desire to publish a complete Bible.

I received thy Favour respecting the Error in my Edition of the New-Testament, 2d verse of the 10th Chapter of the Hebrews. It is doubtless an Error; but as we copied it from a Cambridge Edition, done under the immediate Authority of the *immaculate* (shall I say) King of Britain, I hold myself less responsible; or at least I hope this Circumstance will be considered as some Explanation [?] of the Blunder. I am well pleased that

⁵ George C. Rockefeller, "The First Testaments Printed in New Jersey," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, XLV (1951); William Nelson, *Issues of the New Jersey Press* (Paterson, 1899). While looking for the 1780 edition, Rockefeller "rediscovered" the 1779 edition in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, where it had gone unnoticed since its acquisition in 1924. During the same hunt, Rockefeller located the 1782 edition in the Yale University Library.

it claimed thy Attention, and have noted it accordingly. Should other Errors occur, thou wouldst much oblige me by pointing them out also; for I mean to do my best in the Quarto Edition of the Bible, which I expect to begin this Fall. It would be very agreeable to me if I could have thy Assistance in Reading the Proof-Sheets; but if thou wert willing to take the Trouble I do not see how I ——— at it.

It is much to be regretted there were not more Readers of these excellent Writings, the Scriptures—honest Readers—Searchers after Truth. But alas! the World in general are become too wise to seek information in these holy Writings—and, what is most to be lamented is, that those especially who are Men of Letters, and those who ought to know better, are generally the most delinquent. What is the Cause? Is it not that the *Temple* is too much occupied, as in old Time, with those who sell Oxen and Sheep and Doves—and where are the Changers of Money sitting?⁶

The publication and sale of books by subscription developed from the system of individual patronage of authors. "It is in effect the exchange of the single patron for the many, the single patron, with his indefinite assurance of aid, for the many, with their pledges to purchase upon publication, at a fixed price, one or more copies of a proposed book." This procedure was of extraordinary importance in the marketing of books in the eighteenth century. Collins simply adopted the plan he had employed in publishing two separate compilations of New Jersey laws, one in 1776 and the other in 1784.

Risking no financial loss, despite his personal determination, Collins insisted that the printing of the Bible would be started as soon as 3,000 copies had been reserved by subscribers, the book "to be finished without Delay." However, subscriptions did not come in as quickly as he had expected. Sometime between the initial announcement of December 1789 and the completion of the Bible Collins tried to attract more subscribers by agreeing to include John Downname's *Concordance* in the bound volume without increasing the original price. He said subscribers were far short of the number proposed but that he had made up his mind "to risk such a Number of Copies as he apprehends will be sufficient to cover all the Subscriptions that may be obtained."⁸ Collins's optimism is to be admired,

⁶ Livingston Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁷ Lawrence C. Wroth, "Book Production and Distribution from the Beginning to the War Between the States," in *The Book in America: A History of the Making, the Selling, and the Collecting of Books in the United States*, ed. Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt (New York, 1939), p. 48.

⁸ Quoted in Simms, pp. 128-129.

but seldom in the middle eighteenth century did presses average much more than 300 to 500 copies of a book. One exception was Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*, 9,771 copies of which he and David Hall printed and sold in 1766.⁹ Another exception, of course, was the Bible, the popularity of which Collins must have counted on, in view of the fact that his was to be the first printed in New Jersey and only the second of its kind in the country.

Before Aitken's Bible there had been other efforts to publish English editions in America, but the sparseness of the colonial population and the attendant mechanical difficulties of printing such a large work precluded their publication. "Bibles, however, were imported freely from England and Holland, but when the colonies declared their independence, the matter soon became serious. Books could not be so easily imported, and there soon followed a general destitution of Bibles, as well as other books, which was keenly felt."¹⁰ So acute was the shortage and the believed need that the Continental Congress in 1777 resolved to import 20,000 copies of the Bible. This was never done, but Aitken published an edition of the New Testament, followed by three more editions in 1778, 1779, and 1781, two years before Collins issued his first New Testaments.

Encouraged by the reception of these editions of the New Testament, Aitken announced his proposals to publish the whole Bible, and successfully petitioned Congress to adopt the following resolution: "That the United States in Congress assembled, highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken [and] they recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States, and hereby authorize him to publish this recommendation in the manner he shall think proper."¹¹

One important difference between the production of Aitken's Bible and the production of Collins's is that in 1782 the war was still not settled and Aitken was forced to work under conditions much less propitious than those existing for the New Jersey printer several years later. As a writer in the *Freeman's Journal*, a Philadelphia publication, said in 1781: ". . . the whole book is . . . purely American, and has risen, like the fabled Phoenix, from the ashes of that

⁹ Cited by Wroth in *The Book in America*. The Franklin & Hall Work Book for the years 1759-1766 is in the Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.

¹⁰ Simms, pp. 125-126.

¹¹ Cited in Wright, p. 58.

pile in which our enemies supposed they had consumed the liberties of America."¹² Also, in relation to Collins's cautious subscription plan, Aitken is said to have lost "more than three thousand pounds specie" due to the costly circumstances of production. Collins, we may assume, was not willing to suffer a similar embarrassment.¹³ It is also interesting to note that Collins's decision to publish a "purely American" Bible came at about the same time Congress denied Aitken the exclusive right to print Bibles in this country for fourteen years.¹⁴ A new enterprise had been opened to the book-publishing industry, and Collins was among the first to seize the opportunity.

Collins's printed proposals included extracts from the minutes of various religious denominations which endorsed his project. The pamphlet also contained a specimen of the type and paper to be used in the Bible, and also a blank form on which subscribers could sign up for copies. Copies of this pamphlet were distributed in most of the states in order to get the widest possible coverage among printers, booksellers, and churchmen. In Philadelphia subscriptions were solicited by Joseph Crukshank, Collins's former partner, and William Young. Edmund Prior and Samuel London solicited New Yorkers, and in Boston David West and Ebenezer Larkin were the printer's agents. Joseph Townsend sought subscribers in Baltimore.

Most of Collins's support, however, came from the religious groups. On the last page of his proposals Collins printed an appeal to the sects: "The Editor . . . wishes to attract the Attention, and obtain the Countenance of People of ALL Denominations in this arduous Undertaking." Early in the Bible's planning stage the printer was able to win, first, the support of the Society of Friends, but also substantial encouragement from the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, and the Baptists.

At the Meeting for Sufferings in Philadelphia on March 19, 1789, the Quakers recommended to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting that they appoint committees

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

¹³ Simms, p. 127.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Aitken's appeal and the denial of Congress were in 1789. After Aitken's Bible and before Collins's, William Woodhouse of Philadelphia "published" the *Christian's New and Complete Family Bible* in 1788 and 1790, but no copies have been located and there is doubt that it was printed in America. It was advertised as a folio edition. Also in 1790 William Young of Philadelphia issued a small "school edition" of the complete Bible. For details see Hills.

to assist Collins in obtaining subscriptions. By October the clerk of the Chesterfield Meeting, of which Collins was a member, reported that he had received money for twenty-three Bibles, a substantial number for that comparatively small group.¹⁵ Typical of the general cooperation among Quakers was the decision by the Meeting for Sufferings of the New England Yearly Meeting, held on April 1, 1789, to recommend that individual monthly meetings "appoint suitable persons to promote and receive Subscriptions agreeable to the tenor of said proposals." The meeting also decided to act as a collection agency for subscriptions in New England. Collins was authorized to print the endorsement as part of his proposals.¹⁶

The Presbyterians, at a meeting of their general assembly on May 25, 1789, in Philadelphia, appointed a number of delegates "to lay Mr. Collins's Proposals before their respective Presbyteries; and to recommend to them, by Order of the General Assembly, that a Person or Persons be appointed in every Congregation . . . to procure Subscriptions."¹⁷

The Presbyterians, whose enthusiasm and assistance in "every Congregation" must have heightened Collins's own enthusiasm, further appointed, through their New York and New Jersey Synod, a three-man committee to help the printer revise and correct proof sheets. The clergymen were Dr. John Witherspoon and Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith, presidents in succession of the College of New Jersey, and John F. Armstrong, clerk of the general assembly. In following years, these Calvinists reaffirmed their endorsement, "that it be recommended to every presbytery and every individual of this assembly, to make returns of all subscriptions made for this purpose. . . ."¹⁸

The Episcopalians were next to endorse the Collins Bible. At the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Philadelphia on August 8, 1789, they resolved: "That the Members of this Conven-

¹⁵ Minutes, Chesterfield Monthly Meeting, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, 302 Arch Street, Philadelphia, p. 103.

¹⁶ Archives, New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, Providence, R. I.

¹⁷ Minutes, General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

¹⁸ Letter to author from William B. Miller, assistant secretary, Presbyterian Historical Society, October 10, 1962.

tion will assist Mr. Collins in the procuring of Subscriptions."¹⁹ Rev. John Cox, of St. John's in Trenton, a personal friend of Collins, had been a leader in the June endorsement by New Jersey Episcopalians at their state convention in Elizabethtown. He also urged other states to follow suit.

The Baptists made known their receptiveness to Collins's project at their Philadelphia convention in October. They were more explicit in what they expected of this new edition of the Bible. Like the Presbyterians, they appointed a committee to help Collins with revisions and corrections, but instructed the committee to try to prevent the inclusion of the Apocrypha, "or any Notes of any Kind," for such they believed would have "a dangerous Tendency to corrupt the Simplicity and Truth of the sacred Scriptures."²⁰

The Presbyterians had been somewhat skeptical of Collins's decision to include as part of the finished volume Jean Frederic Ostervald's scholarly *Practical Observations on the Old and New Testaments*. However, they consented to go along with the printer and the other denominational committees. Their Calvinist heritage had been relaxed "in such Manner as may best promote the Publication."²¹

Nevertheless, Collins took note of the debate and printed in his proposals the following compromise:

Finding a Variety of Sentiments respecting the Apocrypha and any Notes on the Text, the Editor informs the Publick, that he is desirous to comply with the Wishes of every Subscriber, as well as with the Directions of the Committees of different Denominations on this Head;—Subscribers, therefore, upon timely Notice, shall be supplied with Books containing either the Apocrypha or Ostervald's Notes, or both, or neither—as they choose.—In this Situation the Editor is under the absolute Necessity of throwing Ostervald's Notes at the End of the Book, subject to such additional Expense as shall be agreed upon by the Committee hereafter mentioned.²²

Such reluctance on the part of some denominations to accept the Apocrypha or any interpretation of the Scriptures, even by the noted

¹⁹ *Reminiscences of Isaac and Rachel (Budd) Collins* (Philadelphia, 1893), p. 18.

²⁰ Collins's proposals pamphlet, Huntington Library, p. 3.

²¹ Presbyterian Minutes, Presbyterian Historical Society.

²² Proposals pamphlet, p. 2.

French minister of Switzerland, probably came as no surprise to Collins. For one thing, it was often a Friend's misfortune to be accused by other Protestants of slighting the Bible. But the printer wanted to make his edition of the Bible complete and attractive for as many potential subscribers as possible.²³

Collins came as close as he probably hoped in realizing the "Countenance of People of ALL Denominations." What remained, in addition to the actual labor of printing and binding his "arduous Undertaking," was the final endorsement of the interdenominational committee. Besides Witherspoon, Smith, and Armstrong for the Presbyterians, other signers of the statement were Oliver Hart, Samuel Jones, and Burgiss Allison for the Baptists. Their statement of approval is dated August 1790:

The Underwritten have examined the edition of Holy Scriptures which Mr. Isaac Collins of Trenton is publishing, as far as he has proceeded—are highly satisfied with the neatness and accuracy of the work—and believe that in the critical attention paid to the different editions of England and Scotland, to the difference of words which are to be found in these editions, and to the care bestowed upon the execution of the whole, the work will be equal to any in the English language.²⁴

By September 1791, nearly two years after the first public announcements of his proposals, Collins's Bible had grown from an expected 984 pages to the final 1,150, made bulkier by Downname's *Concordance*. On September 1 the printer released a broadside together with a general newspaper notice promising subscribers that the book would be finished by October 1, and although it may be reasonable to assume that some copies were issued to subscribers on that date, there is no evidence that he was able to keep his promise. In a notice that first appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on January 11, 1792, Collins reported that the Bible was "in the hands of several binders—and when the books are ready for delivery, subscribers will be notified where to call or send for them." The notice

²³ Variations in content were observed in several copies of the Bible I examined. Of the two at Rutgers, one is without Ostervald's *Notes*, the prefatory "To the Reader," and "Account of the dates or time of writing of the books of the New Testament." The second copy is complete, as is the one in the New Jersey State Library. The three contain Downname's *Concordance*, but a copy in the Savitz Library, Glassboro State College, is without either the *Notes* or the *Concordance*.

²⁴ *Reminiscences*, p. 20.

continued to appear in the *Gazette*, Collins's regular medium of advertising in Philadelphia, until April 18, which suggests that subscribers had begun to receive their copies.²⁵

Meanwhile, Collins's famous competitor as the publisher of the first quarto King James Bible in America, Isaiah Thomas of Worcester, Massachusetts, had also run behind schedule. In a notice dated September 29, 1791, inserted in the October 19 edition of the *Pennsylvania Journal and the Weekly Advertiser*, Thomas's favorite Philadelphia paper, he reported "this day completed the Old and New Testaments of his Royal Quarto Edition of the Holy Bible." He said that the Apocrypha and the index had yet to be finished but that he anticipated all would be done by the last day of November. But it was not until December 22 that Thomas was finally able to advertise in his own *Massachusetts Spy: or, the Worcester Gazette*, "The Royal Quarto Bible . . . is THIS DAY [December 15] completed from the Press." In the same edition of the *Spy* the printer notified subscribers to his folio Bible that the printing of the first volume was completed the same day, "and will be put in boards, with all speed. Subscribers may be supplied . . . in fourteen days from this date. . . ." However, Thomas's September notice continued to appear in Philadelphia papers until March 21, 1792, a month before Collins's advertisements ceased to appear in that city.²⁶

What all this suggests is that neither Collins nor Thomas was able to issue bound copies of the Bible in 1791, the date that appears on the title pages of both editions. This was not unusual, for printers seldom were able to keep exact schedules. For such a large undertaking as a complete quarto Bible Collins and Thomas may well have

²⁵ A copy of the broadside Collins released on September 1 is in the Boston Public Library. The same information appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for six weeks in October and November. On November 8 in the *Brunswick Gazette*, New Brunswick, N.J., he reported that "Subscriptions will be received until the last day of the twelfth month (December) next." Another piece of evidence is the date, August 1, 1792, which appears in an inscribed copy Collins presented to James Ewing "for his attention to correcting the press." It may be that Collins waited until he had satisfied subscribers before presenting free copies to helpful hands. This copy is now owned by Michael Papantonio of New York City.

²⁶ How many bound copies Thomas was able to supply in December we do not know, but it seems unlikely that a bindery of that time could have produced many volumes in fourteen days, that is, the same length of time he had allowed for the folio. For more information see Clifford K. Shipton, *Isaiah Thomas: Printer, Patriot and Philanthropist, 1749-1831* (Rochester, 1948), pp. 58-59.

been hampered by short supplies of type, slow proofreading, problems with engravings (in Thomas's case), and the scarcity of paper and leather. In any event, their race was a close one, with Thomas apparently the winner by a month or so. One other point of interest is the slight difference in size between the two Bibles. Thomas's was a "Royal Quarto"— $8\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$ inches—and Collins's a regular quarto— $8\frac{1}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

In place of the traditional dedication to King James, Collins published an address, or essay, "To the Reader," by Dr. John Wither- spoon. The first paragraph is worth reproducing for its polite repudiation of Great Britain, which in the early days had restricted printing of the Bible in America. "As the Dedication of the English translation of the BIBLE to king James the first of England seems to be wholly unnecessary for the purposes of edification, and perhaps on some accounts improper to be continued in an American edition, the Editor has been advised by some judicious friends to omit it, and to prefix to this edition a short account of the translations of the Old and New Testaments from the original Hebrew and Greek in which they were written." The commentary thereafter appeared in editions of the Bible by other American printers for a period of thirty years. Collins noted in the preface, or "advertisement," to the second edition, which was published in New York in 1806-07, that Mathew Carey, William Durrell, and other printers adopted the 1791 edition as their standard of correctness. The printer also identified Dr. Wither- spoon, whose name did not appear in the 1791 edition, as the author of the introductory commentary. The care taken by Collins is evident from the closing paragraph of the commentary:

The Publisher has only further to add, that he has made the following impression from the Oxford edition of 1784 by Jackson and Hamilton—and has been particularly attentive in the revisal and correction of the proof-sheets with the Cambridge edition of 1668 by John Field—with the Edinburgh edition of 1775 by Kincaid, and, in all variations, with the London edition of 1772 by Eyre and Strahan—that where there was any difference in words, or in the omission or addition of words, among these, he followed that which appeared to be most agreeable to the Hebrew of Arias Montanus, and to the Greek of Arias Montanus and Leusden, without permitting himself to depart from some one of the above-mentioned English copies, unless in the mode of spelling, in which he has generally followed Johnson.

The Bible was “well bound,” as Collins had promised in his proposals pamphlet and subsequent advertisements. Though bookbinding by the 1790’s had become a highly decorative art in America, Collins’s Bible, like most of the books he produced, was plainly bound. It is hard to tell how many different binders he hired for the job, but the Wilmington firm of Craig and Lea bound a quantity in sprinkled sheep, simply adorned on the front and back by blind fillets. A binder’s label, or “ticket,” inside the cover of a copy in the Library of Congress identifies the Wilmington binders. Plain endpapers are glued on the insides of the boards, but two marks of superior workmanship stand out—raised cords and silk headbands. The cords, laced into the covers to create attractive ridges across the spine, indicate great care on the part of the binders. Headbands, mainly for show, were sewn onto the top and bottom of the spine. “Careful binders said that a book should no more be seen in a library without headbands than a gentleman should appear in public minus a collar.”²⁷

The two copies owned by Rutgers clearly were bound by different shops. One, whose binder is identified by a ticket as Philip Weaver of Germantown, has a two-line fillet around the edges of the calf covers, five raised cords with gold floral decoration, and the word “Bible” in gold on a red morocco spine panel outlined by a gold floral pattern. The second copy, whose binder is not identified, has a simple double-line border with an elaborate blind-tooled center pattern forming two boxes, or panels. The cords are raised, but if gold tooling was used it is no longer visible on the calf.

On at least one occasion we know of Collins contracted James Muir and George Hyde of Philadelphia to bind one copy of the quarto Bible in two volumes. For what must have been a special customer, or subscriber, the order called for morocco, gilt leaves, and gold tooling on the spine and covers. According to the receipted invoice from Muir and Hyde, now in the Stewart Collection of the Glassboro State College Library, Glassboro, New Jersey, Collins paid the large sum of £4 10s.

Collins’s Bible was an immediate success. Four-fifths of the first printing, which he increased to five thousand, eventually were purchased by the Society of Friends. Tradition has it that Joseph Cruk-

²⁷ Quoted in C. Clement Samford, *The Bookbinder in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg* (Williamsburg, 1964) p. 29.

shank of Philadelphia, for one, could not sell any other quarto Bibles after Collins's became available.

Hugh Gaine, by this time the dean of New York printers, entered the field in 1792 with what is believed to be the first printing of the Bible in that city. Gaine's edition, however, is said to have been set in type in Scotland and shipped to the United States. About the same time another New York firm, Hodge and Campbell, issued an edition fully composed in that city.

Publication of the King James version thereafter spread rapidly in the United States. More than twenty editions of the complete Bible and more than forty of the New Testament were published before 1800. Of the Bibles, ten were published in Philadelphia, seven in Worcester, Massachusetts, two in Trenton, and three in New York. Of the New Testaments, sixteen appeared in Philadelphia, four or five from Collins's press in Trenton, five in Wilmington, four in New Haven, three in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, three in Boston, two in New York, two in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and two in Exeter, New Hampshire.²⁸ James Adams, Collins's former master, had issued the first New Testament in Delaware in 1781, and Shepard Kollock printed an edition in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, in 1788. In addition, another close friend, Joseph Cruikshank, began printing Testaments in 1782 and issued the first American edition of John Wesley's version in 1791. Archibald Bartram, a nephew, published a New Testament in Philadelphia in 1799.

Biblical scholars have long referred to Collins's Bible as one of the most correct editions. Great care was taken in its preparation. A copy of the Cambridge edition which Collins followed to correct the proof sheets was loaned to him by its owner, a Princeton mathematician. The printer turned to Rev. John F. Armstrong for advice on the Hebrew and Greek texts. A Trenton clergyman, Armstrong had worked with Collins in developing the Trenton Academy. Several of Collins's children examined the proofs as many as eleven times, and received one pound for each error they detected. They missed a broken letter, a misplaced punctuation mark, and *thy* doctrine for *the* doctrine in I Timothy 4:16.

As sales of the Bible rose, Collins, like other Bible publishers, issued a smaller, octavo, edition in 1793 and 1794. It did not include

²⁸ Simms, p. 128. See also Hills, pp. 1-14.

the extensive index or Downname's *Concordance*. The reason for the two dates on the title page is that Collins printed the Old Testament in 1793 and the New Testament in 1794, sometimes binding the latter separately in a less expensive cover. Rutgers has a copy. He published a second edition of the 1791 Bible from his New York shop in 1806-07, his final imprint before retiring from business. However, his firm issued a third edition sometime after 1813.