

WINCHESTER COLLEGE AND THE KING JAMES BIBLE

Thomas James

Thomas James was invited to become one of the Translators of the King James Bible and was engaged in negotiations with John Rainolds to join the Second Oxford Company which had responsibility for the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation. His employer, Sir Thomas Bodley, had other ideas and, despite the objections of James, directly intervened with Rainolds to terminate the agreement.

Clearly the catalogue of the Bodleian Library was regarded, at least by its founder, as of far greater value than a new translation of the Bible. Had Bodley agreed to Thomas James taking part in the translation, the latter would have been the sixth Translator educated at Winchester College.

Ryves and 'Fairclough'

Of two of the group there is not a great deal by way of information. There is a letter from Thomas Bilson to Thomas Lake, (dated 19 April 1605) naming George Ryves as an overseer for the Second Westminster Company, which was responsible for the Epistles. Ryves was at that time Warden of New College, the sister foundation of William of Wykeham at Oxford, and had previously been the sub-warden at Winchester, in which capacity he will reappear later in this account. There is also the shadowy 'Mr Fairclough' who was a member of the First Oxford Company, responsible for the section of the Old Testament from Isaiah to Malachi. There is some disagreement about the identity of this scholar, but the generally accepted identification now is that he is the Richard Fairclowe, who was born in Bedford and entered Winchester aged 12 in 1565. He proceeded scholar and fellow of New College, and was, at the key period, rector of Bucknell in Oxfordshire.

Arthur Lake

Of Arthur Lake's contribution we can be more precise. Lake was admitted a Winchester scholar on Christmas Day 1581 at the age of 12. He had previously been a pupil at King Edward VI School, Southampton, where he had been taught by Adrian Savaria, a distinguished scholar who was also involved in the translation of the King James Bible as a member of the First Westminster Company, responsible for the Old Testament from Genesis to Kings 2. Lake proceeded to New College as a scholar and subsequently a fellow (1589-1600). His rise in church and state thereafter was steady: Rector of Havant and then of Chilcomb, Archdeacon of Surrey, fellow of Winchester, Warden of New College, Master of St Cross, Dean of Worcester, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and Keeper of the Great Seal in 1616. His own abilities no doubt helped, as might the fact that he was the younger brother of

Sir Thomas Lake, James I's secretary of state. Though not initially a Translator, Lake was drafted in to the Second Westminster Company, responsible for the translation of the Epistles, and was allowed to defer the academic exercises for the degrees of B.D. and D.D. at Oxford on the grounds that the translation took precedence. On two occasions in the first decade of the century Lake was a benefactor to the Library at Winchester, and on his death in 1635 left twenty pounds worth of books, which included his two volume Hebrew Bible, though as this was the Basel 1618 edition, it was not, unfortunately, one which he had used in the translation.

Thomas Bilson

Thomas Bilson was involved with the translation right from the start: he was present, together with Richard Bancroft, the archbishop of Canterbury, and Miles Smith, at the king's interrogation of the leading Puritans on the second day of the Hampton Court conference. Towards the end of the translation he, with Miles Smith, is said to have put the finishing touches to the whole work before it was sent to Bancroft for his fiat. Bilson is thought to have been responsible for the Epistle Dedicatory, which has a title in far larger type than used in any other part of the text. He is also believed to have been responsible for the insertion of the chapter headings, though not to have been actively engaged in the translation because, as Gordon Campbell pointed out, he suffered from 'sciatica, arthritis, vertigo, tinnitus, and "many obstructions and extreme windiness",' which would not have made him the ideal committee member.

Thomas Bilson (1546/7–1616) entered Winchester College as a scholar and proceeded to New College, becoming a fellow in 1563. Bilson resigned that fellowship in 1572, having already taken up a teaching post at Winchester. There was a visitation in 1570–71 designed to eradicate lingering Catholicism, as a result of which the then headmaster resigned. Matthew Parker, the archbishop of Canterbury, along with four other bishops, wrote to the college fellows commending Bilson to the vacancy: only his appointment would 'satisfie our expectation'.

Bilson resigned the headmastership in 1579 to concentrate on theological study, proceeding to the B.D. that June and D.D. in January 1581, the year he was elected Warden of Winchester College, a position equivalent to the Chairman of the Board of Governors, and was the first married holder of that post. In 1596 he was made bishop of Worcester, and was translated to the see of Winchester the following year.

He assisted Sir Robert Cecil in resolving the delicate problem of persuading Elizabeth I to agree to the appointment of John Harmer as his successor.

JOHN HARMAR c1555-1613

John Harmer was born of unknown parentage at Newbury in Berkshire possibly in 1555, and entered Winchester College as a scholar in 1569. Three years later he became a scholar at New College, Oxford, where he matriculated early in 1575, graduating on 21 January 1577, when he was elected a fellow. Anthony Wood records that he was '*always accounted a most solid theologian, admirably well read in the fathers and schoolmen, and in his younger years*

a subtile Aristotelian'. His first published work, an English translation of Calvin's sermons on the ten commandments, appeared in 1579 and was reprinted in 1581. This translation was dedicated to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and the preface records that it had been royal patronage that had allowed him to study at Winchester and Oxford. Leicester had apparently persuaded Elizabeth I to support Harmar's entry as a scholar both at Winchester and at New College:

Your Honour's good procurement of her Majesty's gracious favour, whereby I first became a Scholar in Winchester College, afterward to be removed to the New College of Oxford, whereof at this present I am a poor member, I could never since forget, or bury so good a benefit in such great oblivion

It appears that Harmar travelled on the continent some time before 1585. Wood records that Harmar disputed at Paris with Catholic theologians, and there is an account of him disputing with leading Lutherans in Strasbourg. He also stayed some time at Geneva, where he attended Theodore Beza's lectures and sermons and '*found him no lesse than a father unto me in curtesie & good will.*' He acknowledged this debt at Oxford in 1587 with an English translation, also dedicated to Leicester, of Beza's French sermons on the Song of Songs, in the 'Dedicatory Epistle' to which he repeated his professions of indebtedness:

The ground and foundation of my first studies at Winchester by your honours only means, in obtaining her highness letters for my preferment unto that school; the rearing of the farther frame of them in this College, wherein placed by your Lordships favour, I yet continue, my time spent to my great desire and contentment in the parts beyond the Seas by your Honours intercession; my room and degree I do now enjoy in the University being one of her Majesty's public professors, purchased by your Lordships favourable mediation.

On 25 March 1585 Harmar was appointed Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, a position he held for five years. In 1586 he was responsible for the first Greek book printed at Oxford: an edition of six sermons of John Chrysostom from New College manuscripts, dedicated to Sir Thomas Bromley, the Lord Chancellor.

From 1588 until 1595 Harmar was headmaster of Winchester College, for the first two years of which tenure he continued with his Regius Professorship, regularly commuting between Winchester and Oxford, and during that time he edited manuscripts at New College to produce the first edition of the Greek text of twenty-two of Chrysostom's sermons to the people of Antioch. This work he dedicated to Bromley's successor, Sir Christopher Hatton. Harmar was evidently a man who maintained useful connections.

One of the most remarkable survivals of evidence both of Harmar's headmastership and of his character is an Elizabethan schoolboy's fair-copy book. This volume is the work of William Twisse, elected scholar in 1591, and later chaplain to Princess Elizabeth, James I's daughter, who became Queen of Bohemia, and is remembered as the Winter Queen. In it Twisse recorded Harmar's dictation exercises. Many verses refer to the political situation of the time: the horrors of the Inquisition, the wickedness of the Pope and the blessings of England under the sovereignty of Elizabeth I, and the war with Spain. There is a poem of

four six-line stanzas commemorating the defeat of the Spanish Armada. This is the only English item in the book and follows the original Latin by Beza, Harmar's Geneva father-figure and whose sermons Harmar had already translated, and this raises the intriguing possibility that the English version is Harmar's own work. The manuscript, besides having two verse headings rather surprisingly in German, also includes accounts of Asia and the discovery of America: clearly the Elizabethan Wykehamist was expected to be cognizant of current affairs.

There are many local, school-based pieces, which are evidence of Harmar's skilful pedagogy: these are pieces designed to entertain as well as instruct. There is an amusing series of references to the Winchester scholars of his day, some of whom are named and can be identified from College records: Hatclyffe, who shouted louder than anyone else the day the School went down; three boys, whose names are not identifiable from Kirby's *Winchester Scholars*, and who we must presume were gentlemen commoners, made a terrible din at night on musical instruments, keeping the entire school awake. There is a witty response to a parent who enquires why the curriculum is not more geared up to the requirements of future employment prospects, and there is even a lengthy poem on the untidiness of the scholars: 'Do you mean to say,' he makes an enquirer ask, 'that these are representatives of one of our greatest and most famous public schools? Then why, why, are they so disreputable?' There is nothing new under the sun.

It is perhaps germane to his skill as a translator that in this manuscript book there are to be found a shape poem, acrostics and double acrostics, bilingual puns, and a macaronic jest. There are two long poems in which every word begins with the same letter of the alphabet. Though each of these is a conventional rhetorical exercise, the fact that they all appear may well be an indication of Harmar's constant awareness of language, a key element of translating.

One notable detail is that this remarkable survival of Elizabethan school-room practice is not unique. There is another very similar manuscript in Balliol College Library, which records Harmar's dictations to an earlier Winchester intake. This copy was owned by Leonard Bennett, who was elected a scholar in 1587. The collection also contains the Spanish Armada poem, and as a whole it is 'largely identical' to the Winchester volume. That two such exercise books have survived may be chance, but in a reversal of Lady Bracknell's parents dictum, it could be argued that one survival may be accidental, two look more as if the preservation were intentional. This could be seen as a testimonial to Harmar's pedagogy from those who benefited.

John Harmar had been installed as a prebendary at Winchester on 10 January 1595; he became rector of Compton the same year and of Droxford in 1596. In 1596 he was elected Warden of Winchester, a post he held until his death. This election followed an unexpected contest. When Thomas Bilson had been made Bishop of Worcester Elizabeth I, having just made Sir Henry Savile Provost of Eton (a royal foundation), saw the opportunity of adding the Winchester wardenship to her list of prerogatives. Claiming that the previous posts of successful candidates to bishoprics became gifts of the crown, she nominated her chaplain, Henry Cotton. Cotton was ineligible for election according to the statutes, being neither a

scholar nor a fellow of either of William of Wykeham's foundations (that Sir Henry Savile had not satisfied the similar Eton restrictions, being both a layman and married, had not prevented his elevation). The Winchester fellows put up an alternative candidate, George Ryves, the then sub-warden and subsequently overseer of the translation of the Epistles. Ryves was supported by six other fellows in a letter to Sir Robert Cecil, and was also supported by the Warden and thirty-four fellows of New College, who petitioned Elizabeth in his favour. Elizabeth, irritated by this opposition, issued Letters Patent appointing Cotton Warden and mandated the Bishop of Winchester to induct him. Ryves rather speciously claimed that the out-going Bilson had not yet resigned as Warden, though he had in fact already been consecrated Bishop of Worcester. When Cotton arrived in Winchester with the royal mandate the fellows simply bolted the gate and refused to let him into the College. Subsequently Harmar submitted a counter-testimonial, which is preserved in a letter to Cecil and eventually Elizabeth agreed to Harmar's election.

In 1597 Harmar caused a room to be built over the old bakehouse, and this room was his study. It is a substantial room, measuring 4.65m x 7.35m, and with a handsome oriel window, under which Harmar had inset a stone commemorating the extension. That stone is still visible in College Street, to the east of the main entrance to the College. Though the study was sited over the bakehouse, and thus had free underfloor central-heating, it was sparsely furnished. The inventory for 1604 records merely that it contained:

1 long standing press with 6 drawing boxes at each [end] and 2 cupboards with locks and keys to the middle

In this room John Harmar started work on his major contribution to the religious, literary and cultural life of England, and indeed, in recognition of his role he was made B.D. and D.D. on 16 May 1605.

Among the set of fifteen rules which were issued to all Translators, number 8 laid out:

Every particular man of each company to take ye same chapter or chapters, and having translated or amended them severally by himselfe where he thinks good, all to meete together, confer what they have done, and agree for their Parts what should stand.

We can be fairly confident that Harmar's individual work took place in the study he had had built. The Company as a whole first met in Sir Henry Savile's rooms at Merton College Oxford on 13 February 1605.

Rule 10 for the Translators specified:

If any Company, upon ye review of ye books so sent, really doubts, or differ upon any place, to send them word thereof, note the place, and withal send their reasons; to which if they consent not, the difference to be compounded at ye generall meetinge, which is to be of the chiefe persons of each company, at ye ende of ye worke

John Bois, a member of the Second Cambridge Company, responsible for the Apocrypha, attended the general meeting and kept a record of the discussions. The Bois MS identifies

Andrew Downes, the Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, under the initials A.D. and there are references to a mysterious ‘D. Hutch,’ who cannot be the Ralph Hutchinson of the Second Westminster Company, as he had died in 1606. Only one individual is named in full in the manuscript – John Harmar. There are also a small number of references to an ‘H’, who may be Harmar, ‘Hutch,’ or a third party. The names of the others are not recorded.

Scholars have differed as to who was the director of the Second Oxford Company. Nicolson names Ravis as the director; R.D. Goulding in ODNB says of Sir Henry Savile, ‘he seems to have headed this group’; Gordon Campbell writes ‘the notional director of the company was presumably John Perinne’, while David Norton points out that under Rule 13 either Perinne or Harmar should have been Director of the Company, having been Regius Professors of Greek. A letter has recently surfaced from Archbishop Bancroft to Harmar, dated 1606, in which the archbishop says that the king wants to know why the translation of the New Testament section is taking so much time. That this letter is directed to Harmar seems to prove that he was, in fact, the director of the Company, and was clearly seen by his Company as one of the ‘chiefe persons.’ This is supported by the opinion of Anthony Wood who wrote of Harmar that he ‘*had a prime hand in the translation of the New Testament into English*’, a claim which is prominent in the epitaph to be found on Harmar’s memorial in New College chapel.

John Harmar died on 11 October 1613. His recorded wealth at his death was approximately £427 – plus several properties and his library. He was married to Elizabeth, who survived him; they had no children. He left a number of his Greek books to New College and gave his collection of foreign-language bibles to Winchester. The volumes he bequeathed to the College are distinguished either by a donatory plaque, or by a gilt ornament combining Harmar’s initials with those of the College. Many are also inscribed on the title-page.

One of the more notable features of the Winchester Fellows’ Library is that during the period of Harmar’s wardenship there was a campaign to expand the collection. One quid pro quo for benefactors was that a brass-edged donatory plaque would be fixed to the front board. Seven benefactors are commemorated in this fashion. These donatory plaques are unique to the period of Harmar’s election and there are just under one hundred volumes so ornamented. All these volumes are either biblical texts or biblical commentaries. These ninety-plus volumes are not the sum of the books added at this period: the Library Donations Book records that during Harmar’s wardenship there were 54 benefactors, who gave 125 titles in 197 volumes. What is telling is that the volumes generally have fore-edge numbers, and the highest such number on a volume with a donatory plaque is 708 – on Antoine La Roche de Chandieu’s *Opera theologica*, the third edition, of 1598, part of the gift of Sir Robert Cecil. Norton points out that when the Bodleian Library opened in 1602 it had about 2000 books, and that ‘College libraries at Cambridge and Oxford typically held between 250 and 500 books in the late sixteenth century. Trinity College, Cambridge, had about 325 in 1600, of which about 75 were recently acquired law books, and about 160 were religious.’ If one assumes that the fore-edge numbers were added at the time of acquisition, it would appear that under Harmar’s enlightened wardenship, the Winchester library was far larger than most Oxford and Cambridge colleges. Harmar persuaded Old Wykehamists to provide an ideal library for a Translator. He did not need many books of his own.

At first sight the list of bibles which Harmar bequeathed is notable for one conspicuous omission: there is no 1611 King James Bible. There is no 1611 King James Bible in the library of William Branthwaite, a member of the Second Cambridge Company, responsible for the Apocrypha, now in Gonville and Caius College Cambridge. David Norton refers to this with apparent surprise: ‘Even though Branthwaite helped to create it, there is no KJB’. There is no 1611 Bible in the library of George Abbott, member of the same Company as Harmar and subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury, now at Lambeth Palace. When asked about this, the current librarian of Lambeth Palace, Giles Mandelbrote, replied in an e-mail, ‘No, we have puzzled about the absence of Abbot’s 1611 Bible. No evidence it was ever here’. But we are almost certainly wrong to expect the Translators to have been given copies, as if they had signed a modern publishing contract – and the printer could hardly have been expected to hand out over 50 complimentary copies. Moreover the King James Bible was designed to be used in churches – it was not intended to be a personal bible.

What Harmar did leave the College supports the evidence of Selden about the works of the Revisers, where he writes: ‘then they met together, and one read the translation, the rest holding in their hands some Bible, either of the learned tongues or French, Spanish, Italian, etc.’ Harmar had his own copies of translations into Dutch, French, German, Italian and Spanish, the latter in a very nice association copy, signed by the translator, Cassiodoro de Reyna. Harmar also owned the five-language Antwerp polyglot, a number of commentaries, and Hebrew and Greek lexicons. Sadly, there is no evidence of marginalia. The sole evidence of use of these books is the presence of a number of small holes with charred edges which appear to have been made by candle wax dripping on the pages. I say ‘appear’ as I have not summoned up the courage to attempt a practical demonstration of this theory.

Harmar was buried in the chapel of New College. His nephew John Harmar, also Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, promised Wood an account of his uncle's life for the *Athenae Oxoniensis*. This, unfortunately, was never delivered. The failure of his nephew may be one of the reasons why, even in Winchester, Harmar’s contributions to the King James Bible are little known. But the main reason for this anonymity, which he shares with the vast majority of the other Translators, is best summed up by Anthony Walker in his ‘Life of John Bois’:

‘Five years were spent in the translation: which makes no noyse, because it carries no name.’