

The 1716 issue, King George III Presentation Binding



The parable of the vinegar.

(Religion)

[The Vinegar Bible]: The Holy Bible containing the Old Testament and the New / Newly Translated out of the Original Tongues / And with the Former Translations diligently Compared and Revised By his Majesties special Command ... Printed by John Baskett (1716)

Oxford: Printed by John Baskett, Printer to [the] Kings most Excellent Majesty for Great-Britain and for [the] University 1716

\$45,000

Two volumes. Royal folios (measuring 55cm. in height, or 14½" x 21½"). The rarer of two known states (the other bearing a 1717 imprint): Volume 1 (Old Testament and Apocrypha) issued with the illustrated engraved title page engraved by John Sturt and dated 1716; and Volume 2 (New Testament) issued with an engraving of the Annunciation on the letterpress title page and dated 1716.

A rare copy of the magnificent 'Vinegar Bible', in a presentation binding of black levant leather with the Royal Cypher of King George III (surmounted by a crown) stamped in gold in five compartments on the spines of each volume, and the Royal Arms (with "G.R. III" above the crown) embossed at the center of all four covers. Both volumes have early marbled endpapers and wove paper fly leaves, royal blue silk ribbons, all edges gilt. According to an early bookseller's description (tipped onto the front fly leaf): "this copy possesses even an additional interest beyond being the property of, and most likely often read by the Monarch, who expressed a hope 'That the time would come when every poor child in his dominions would be able to read the Bible.'" Whether such speculation is true might be subject to some skepticism, but we can only say that this is a presentation binding.

Baskett's Bible is a landmark in English graphic art, celebrated both for the beauty of its typographical design and many Baroque engravings, and also for its many typographical errors, including the running headline of Luke, chapter 20, which prints: 'The parable of the vinegar,' instead of: 'The parable of the vineyard.' In addition to John Sturt, a copperplate engraver who ran one of the first drawing schools in England at St. Paul's Churchyard, other artists and engravers responsible for the illustrations include James Thornhill, one of the most important English exponents of Baroque decorative painting (and the first English-born artist to be knighted), Gerard and Michael Vandergucht, and the Frenchmen Louis Chéron and Louis du Guernier (both of whom lived and died in London).

This copy of the Vinegar Bible was later owned by Claudia Wright Lea, the daughter of Delaware Governor Preston Lea, a prominent Quaker whose ancestors came to Pennsylvania with William Penn. She was an important collector of botany and horticulture books (now held at the University of South Carolina), and founder of the Garden Clubs of Aiken and South Carolina. She then donated it to a library, where it was kept locked away except for the occasional exhibit, and from whom we purchased it. Small presentation plates are neatly tipped-in along one edge only at the gutter of the front free endpapers.

The original leather binding is rubbed with scattered cracking and some scuffing to the spine backs and edges. Most of the original gilt is faded or tarnished, the boards have been at one time neatly re-jointed (visible only along the hinges), both boards of volume one are detached (neatly split between two leaves [A2 and A3] in Genesis, and two leaves [4Q2 and 4Q3] in the Apocrypha), and the front board of volume two is nearly detached. Else both volumes are overall very good, with a few early paper repairs, and one damaged leaf in the New Testament, where a bottom corner piece of missing text was neatly replaced with an early laid-paper sheet with the missing verses completed in manuscript.

A handsome and exceedingly rare edition of this famous Bible, in the original presentation binding. [BTC#400350]

