

## A NOTE ON TWO RARE BIBLES

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Two rare Bibles have recently been added to the holdings of the Adventist Heritage Center of the James White Library of Andrews University: (1) a copy of the King James English Bible edition of 1617, and (2) a copy of the Christoph Saur German Bible of 1763. These valuable Bibles were donated to the Theological Seminary of Andrews University in 1991 by Dr. Chester J. Gibson, a prominent dentist in McMinnville, Oregon. These Bibles, along with a copy of a significant portion of Martin Luther's first complete Bible of 1534 (donated to Andrews University earlier by Dr. Gibson), were a part of the Wurker Collection of Bibles owned by Gibson, who provided information about this collection in an earlier issue of *AUSS*.<sup>1</sup> Andrews University is fortunate indeed to have received the gift of these three rare Bibles from Dr. Gibson.

Several years ago I provided brief information in *AUSS* concerning both the 1534 Luther edition and Luther's "September Bible" of 1522, his first German Bible, and included therewith some pages from these two Bibles in facsimile reproduction.<sup>2</sup> (The Adventist Heritage Center possesses a full-size facsimile copy of the "September Bible," as well as the copy of the 1534 publication.)

In future issues of *AUSS* I plan to provide descriptive details, historical information, and facsimile reproductions from the newly acquired King James Bible of 1617 and Saur Bible of 1763. In the present preliminary note it is appropriate, however, to include a broad general description of the physical dimensions of the two volumes. The following description has been furnished by Jim Ford, curator of the Adventist Heritage Center:

<sup>1</sup>Chester J. Gibson, "A Note about the Wurker Bible Collection," *AUSS* 23 (1985): 119.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth A. Strand, "Early Luther Bibles: Facsimiles from Several Significant Editions," *AUSS* 23 (1985): 117-128. In addition to the facsimiles of pages in these two Bibles, this article provides three pages in facsimile from the Saur Bible of 1763.

**King James Bible of 1617:**

## Text Block:

41.5 cm high

26.5 cm wide

12.5 cm thick at the outside edge

10.25 cm thick at the spine edge

Weight: 16 pounds, 8 ounces

**Saur Bible of 1763:**

## Text Block:

26 cm high

20 cm wide

8.5 cm thick at the outside edge

8 cm thick at the spine edge

Weight: 6 pounds, 8 ounces

In this preliminary report, a passing mention may also be made concerning the historical context for the two Bible editions (an aspect that I plan to treat in more detail at a later time). The 1617 King James Bible, printed in London by Robert Barker, is the third edition of this version and is particularly valuable in that it exceeds in rarity both the *editio princeps* of 1611 and the second edition of 1613. The 1763 Saur Bible is the second edition in a series of three German Bibles that were printed in Germantown, Pennsylvania, by Christoph Saur and by his son, also named Christoph Saur.<sup>3</sup> The first edition appeared in 1743 and holds the distinction of being the earliest complete Bible to be printed in America in a European language. The third edition was published in 1776, and has received the nickname "gunwad Bible" because of its use in musketry during the Revolutionary War.

<sup>3</sup>Christoph Saur the elder printed a considerable number of works. In his German publications he preferred to have his name spelled as "Saur," whereas in English works he spelled his name "Sower."

The Adventist Heritage Center is fortunate to have all three of these Saur Bibles represented in its collection—a section of the NT of the 1743 edition and complete copies of the 1763 and 1776 editions. Much of the credit for this achievement and numerous other significant accomplishments goes to Mrs. Louise Dederen, the previous Heritage-Center curator, who retired in 1991. In fact, the *AUSS* staff owes her a debt of gratitude for the repeated help she has given with respect to the use and photocopying of rare materials which from time to time have been highlighted in issues of this journal.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Mrs. Dederen is also to be thanked and congratulated for her 25 years of dedicated service, which brought into being a "Heritage Room" and then expanded it to the place where this archive is now truly a "Heritage Center" containing a sizable complex of rooms.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., "A Catalog of Reformation Tracts in the Heritage Room of the James White Library," *AUSS* 24 (1986): 81-112; "Two Notes Concerning Pamphlet Literature of the Reformation Era: 1. A Message from 'Hellish Prince Lucifer' to Martin Luther," *AUSS* 24 (1986): 173-177; "Luther's First Edition of the Pentateuch," *AUSS* 27 (1989): 39-52; and the article cited in n. 2, above.