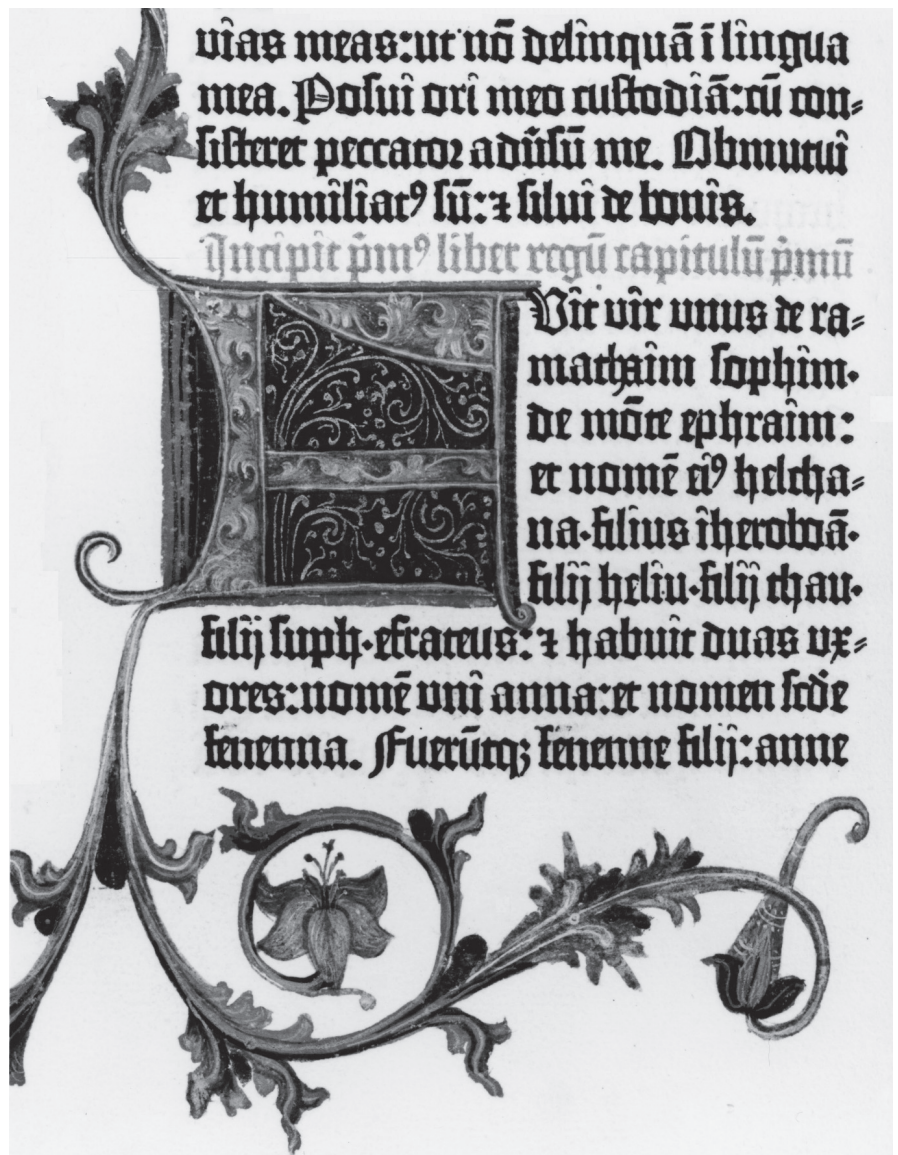


# The First Four Printed Bibles in the Scheide Library

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*Biblia latina.* [Mainz:  
Johann Gutenberg and  
Johann Fust, ca. 1455].

## THE FIRST FOUR PRINTED BIBLES

WITH THE acquisition in 2001 of the first book printed in Strasbourg—a Latin Bible printed by Johann Mentelin, not after 1460—the Scheide Library became one of six libraries in the world, but the only one outside Europe, to possess copies of all of the first four printed Bibles, beginning with the Gutenberg (42-line) Bible, printed in Mainz and completed probably in 1455, and ending with the second Mainz Bible, completed by Gutenberg’s former partners, Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer, on 14 August 1462. Perhaps even more remarkably, William H. Scheide is only the third private collector in history to own all four. His first predecessor was King George III (1738–1820), whose great collection of rare books was mostly donated to the British Museum in 1829, with a choice remainder still kept at Windsor Castle. The second predecessor was George John, 2nd Earl Spencer (1758–1834), the great-great-great-grandfather of the late Diana, Princess of Wales. The Spencer library, kept at Althorp, was universally accounted the greatest private collection of its era. In 1892 it was purchased en bloc by Enriqueta, widow of the Manchester merchant-philanthropist John Rylands, and it forms the core of the printed books collection of the John Rylands Library, now merged with the University of Manchester.

The history of the Bible and of the invention of printing have been major collecting themes of the Scheide Library for more than a century. As a private library developed over three generations, it is now more than 135 years old, taking its “birthday” from its earliest recorded acquisition: a New York 1861 reprint of Michael Faraday’s *Course of Six Lectures on the Chemical History of a Candle*. The Scheide copy is signed “Wm T Scheide Sept [18]65.” At the time, William Taylor Scheide (1847–1907) was an eighteen-year-old telegraph operator working for the Pittsburgh & Connellsville Railroad Company. Within a few years, he moved north to Pennsylvania’s oil country, centered on Titusville, and from small beginnings made himself a major figure in the rapidly expanding oil industry. Scheide’s deepest interest, however, was in learning and travel, and at the age of forty-two he retired, much to the puzzlement of many of his colleagues. His book collecting, formerly based on omnivorous reading, became more specialized, and his interest in the medieval world, as surviving in charters, manuscripts, and incunables (fifteenth-century printed books), provided one major focus. At the time of his death, W. T. Scheide owned at least one incunable Latin Bible (Venice, 1480) and several fine medieval manuscript Bibles. His son John Hinsdale

Scheide (1875–1942, Princeton Class of 1896) continued the collection in a more meticulous way. His determination to buy significant books in fine condition made him one of the leading American book collectors of the 1920s and 1930s. John H. Scheide’s son, William Hurd Scheide (Princeton Class of 1936) has continued very much in the mold of his father. It is curious to note, however, that as late as 1957 he wrote that he was “not at all a bookman in the sense that my father and grandfather were . . . my main interests have never been and probably never will be in book collecting.” Forty-five years later, we can say that his crystal ball was cloudy: W. H. Scheide’s acquisitions have added exceptional strength and depth to the library he inherited, and he is known throughout the international community of collectors as a bookman by the most rigorous standard.

In that same 1957 essay W. H. Scheide wrote that “the predominant place of the Bible in the Scheide Library is testimony not so much to the piety as to the reading and interpretation of history by its founders. . . .” John H. Scheide “was not concerned to use the Bible for exhortation, but he was tremendously impressed with the influence of the Bible in molding the background of the modern world.” Over the last two millennia, the meaning or definition of “Bible,” for both Christians and Jews, has varied considerably as to languages and the selection and order of the component books. In the Western European Middle Ages (and for centuries afterward within the Roman Catholic Church) the fundamental Bible was the Latin version known as the Vulgate. This is a complex assemblage, of which the largest portion is the series of translations from Hebrew and Greek originals of individual books made by St. Jerome (ca. 340–420) in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The Vulgate text, widely variable from manuscript to manuscript, became relatively fixed in the “Paris Vulgate” of the early thirteenth century. Here, within the milieu of the University of Paris, a more standardized (although far from invariable) text, order of books, and selection of prologues was developed, the latter mostly derived from various letters of Jerome. When the Bible came into print in the mid-fifteenth century, the Mainz compositors of the “Gutenberg” Bible used a now-lost manuscript representing a descendant of the Paris Vulgate. Although their manuscript copy was of no special correctness, it came to have a very long afterlife, for the Gutenberg Bible’s text itself became exceedingly influential in subsequent printings of the Vulgate Bible. In particular, the second, third, and

fourth printed Bibles, as described below, were all set from different copies of the Gutenberg Bible.

The following notes concentrate on the survival history

**I. *Biblia latina* (Gutenberg Bible / 42-line Bible). [Mainz: Johann Gutenberg and Johann Fust, ca. 1455; not after August 1456]. 2 vols.**

The Gutenberg Bible was the first substantial book to be printed from movable types in Europe, although a handful of shorter texts, mostly surviving only in fragments (including two in the Scheide Library), preceded it. From an eyewitness report by Aeneas Sylvius, the future Pope Pius II (1458–1464), we know that the Gutenberg Bible was in an advanced state of production in October–November 1454. Aeneas was given conflicting information about the number of copies, 158 or 180, being printed. About a quarter of the copies were printed on vellum, and about three-quarters on paper. Forty-nine integral copies survive, namely, copies that, whatever their state of completeness, made their way into the twentieth century as bound volumes. An uncertain number of other copies, perhaps a dozen to eighteen, survive only as fragments preserved as binding wrappers or waste material within bookbindings.

The Scheide copy, on paper, was originally sold in the university town of Erfurt, where it was finely illuminated in the so-called Meisen workshop and bound by the university's official binder, Johann Fogel. The Eton College, British Library, and Fulda Landesbibliothek copies were also illuminated in the Meisen workshop, and the Eton and Fulda copies likewise preserve their original Fogel bindings. The first owner of the Scheide copy was probably the Dominican convent in Erfurt. It remained unrecognized and out of sight in the former Dominican church until it was

of the four Bibles, trying to account for the path by which each came from Mainz, Strasbourg, and Bamberg to the Scheide Library in Princeton.

discovered in early 1870 by the local historian Karl Herrmann. It came to the United States in 1873, when it was bought by George Brinley, the famous Americana collector, through the agency of the London book dealer Henry Stevens of Vermont. Stevens's florid invoice, preserved in the Scheide Library, has become famous in its own right. Brinley's New York agents were asked to "let none of Uncle Samuel's Custom House Officials . . . see it without first reverentially lifting their hats." Moreover, "Let no ungodly or thieving politicians lay eyes or hands upon it." We believe that no ungodly or thieving politician has done so, but it is not impossible that an honest politician or two has been in its vicinity.

The copy passed successively to other American collectors: Hamilton Cole, General Brayton Ives, and James W. Ellsworth. The legendary American dealer A. S. W. Rosenbach bought Ellsworth's library in 1923, and he offered the Gutenberg Bible to John H. Scheide, who was at first not tempted because it lacked several leaves. However, the copy remained in Scheide's mind. On 3 January 1924, he wrote to Rosenbach about it: "I happen just now to be in funds." This was enough of a hint. Rosenbach made a minute description of the copy's condition and other features, and finally took it by train to Titusville, where he completed the sale.

**II. *Biblia latina*. [Strasbourg: Johann Mentelin, not after 1460]. 1 vol.**

Mentelin's Latin Bible, the first book printed in Strasbourg and possibly the first book printed outside Mainz, is perhaps the most neglected great monument of the early years of printing. Mentelin, who came to Strasbourg in 1447 from Sélestat, was a scribe and notary who held an official position in the archiepiscopal chancery. Almost none of his books are signed or dated, and how he came to printing is entirely unknown. A chronicle printed in Rome in 1474 says that he began to print in 1458, a date that fits well with the "not after" date of his Bible. Over the centuries, Mentelin's Bible was generally dated to ca. 1470; only around 1870 did it become widely known that the copy at the University of

Freiburg im Breisgau had been rubricated (supplied with manuscript initials, chapter numbers, and headlines) in 1460.

The Mentelin Bible is rarer than the Gutenberg Bible: twenty-eight copies survive, all on paper. The only copy that appeared on the open market in the twentieth century was bought by J. P. Morgan from the London firm of Quaritch in 1923. The Scheide copy bears the illuminated arms of a presumed noble family of Alsace, whose identity has still not been determined. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it belonged to the Franciscan convent of Saverne, some twenty miles northwest of Strasbourg. It

then passed successively to four eighteenth-century bibliophiles: J.-F. de Cisternay du Fay (1662–1723), captain in the French Royal Guards, whose books were auctioned in Paris in 1725; Karl Heinrich, Count Hoym (1694–1736), whose elegant book collection, auctioned in Paris in 1738, was especially esteemed by French collectors; Pietro Antonio Bolongaro-Crevenna (1735–1792), a Milanese merchant long resident in Amsterdam, who after a heavy loss in the currency markets was forced to put his library at auction there in 1789–1790; and Sir George Shuckburgh, Bart. (1751–1804),

an English amateur mathematician and astronomer, whose small but very choice collection, including a Gutenberg Bible now in Mainz, remained unknown to the collecting world for the next 150 years. The Shuckburgh incunables passed from one female line to another for some six generations. Recently, an expert at Christie's in London identified this copy of the Mentelin Bible among the books of a descendant family trust and arranged for the trustees to make a private sale to Mr. Scheide.

### III. *Biblia latina* (36-line Bible). [Bamberg: Albrecht Pfister(?), not after 1461]. 1 vol., containing the New Testament and a significant portion of the Old Testament.

When the 36-line Bible first came to the notice of book collectors in the eighteenth century, it was often considered to be the true Gutenberg Bible, that is, the first printed Bible. The opinion was a respectable one, for in fact the type with which the book is printed was Gutenberg's first font, probably made several years before the more sophisticated Gutenberg Bible font. The question of priority was not resolved definitively until 1890, when the Göttingen scholar Karl Dziatzko brought to light an elegant composition accident which revealed that the 36-line Bible had been set from a copy of the 42-line Bible.

Only fourteen copies, complete and incomplete, survive of the 36-line Bible, all on paper. Various fragments found as binding waste show that there also was a vellum issue, although no integral copy survives. The 36-line Bible has almost never been available on the open market. In 1791 a copy of volume 2 (Proverbs–2 Maccabees, plus the New

Testament), formerly owned by a Venetian patrician, Maffeo Pinelli, was auctioned in London and bought by Sir George Shuckburgh (see Mentelin Bible). The present copy, originally comprising the first and third volumes of a three-volume set, once belonged to the Benedictines of Würzburg, whose convent was dissolved in 1803; it was apparently acquired by Earl Spencer shortly after that date. The Shuckburgh volume 2, meanwhile, had come into the ownership of Sir Charles Jenkinson, who married Shuckburgh's only child, Julia. In 1814 Lord Spencer worked out a swap, whereby he took the Pinelli-Shuckburgh-Jenkinson volume to make a perfect set, and gave back to Jenkinson, finely bound as one volume, the parts he no longer needed of his Würzburg set. This latter volume then remained off the market for some 175 years, until it was offered in a Christie's auction in November 1991, where Mr. Scheide was the successful bidder.

### IV. *Biblia latina*. Mainz: Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer, 14 August 1462. 2 vols., printed on vellum.

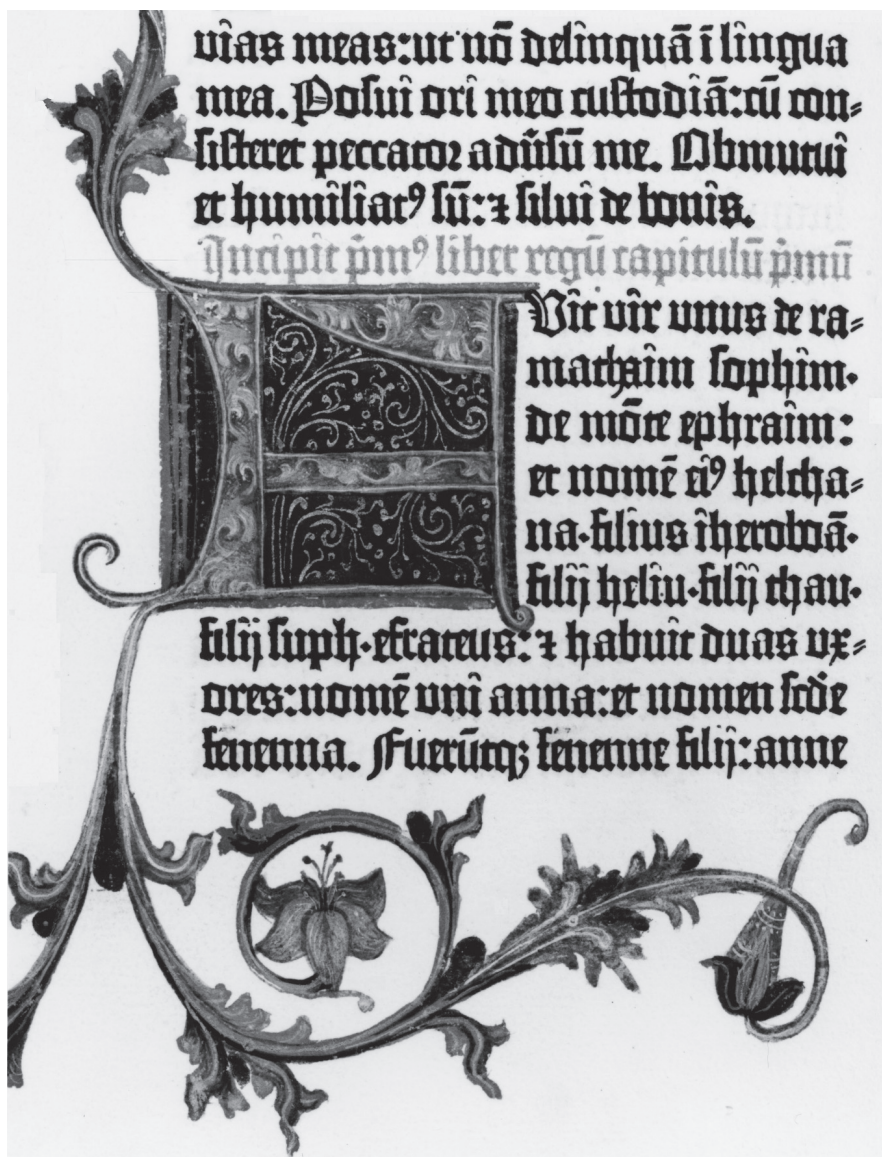
By virtue of its sheer elegance, the 1462 Bible has been valued by connoisseur book collectors since the early seventeenth century. In fact, until the middle of the eighteenth century, it was widely considered to be the first printed Bible. More than eighty copies survive, about equally divided between the paper issue and the vellum issue. Copies were very widely distributed by Fust and Schoeffer, even as far as Italy. The original buyers must have been struck by its beauty, for there are more finely decorated and illuminated copies of it than of any other early printed Bible. The Scheide copy, of the vellum issue, was illuminated in Mainz by an anonymous artist, or workshop, known as the Fust Master, for much of its finest work is to be found in incunables printed by Johann Fust. The art historian Eberhard

König has described the illuminations in this copy as being of "exquisite quality." No definite ownership is known until the early nineteenth century, when the Neapolitan Duke of Cassano Serra sold it to Earl Spencer. Spencer disposed of it as a duplicate in 1821, and it went into the library of the Duke of Sussex (son of George III) and then of Robert Stayner Holford (d. 1892). In June 1925, under conditions of considerable secrecy, A. S. W. Rosenbach succeeded in buying a remarkable collection of Holford highspots from his son. John H. Scheide had first refusal on the 1462 Bible and promptly took it. A year and a half earlier, he had been slow in contacting Rosenbach about another vellum copy, and by the time he showed his interest, it had already been sold to the New York banker Carl H. Pforzheimer.

## THE FIRST FOUR PRINTED BIBLES IN THE SCHEIDE LIBRARY

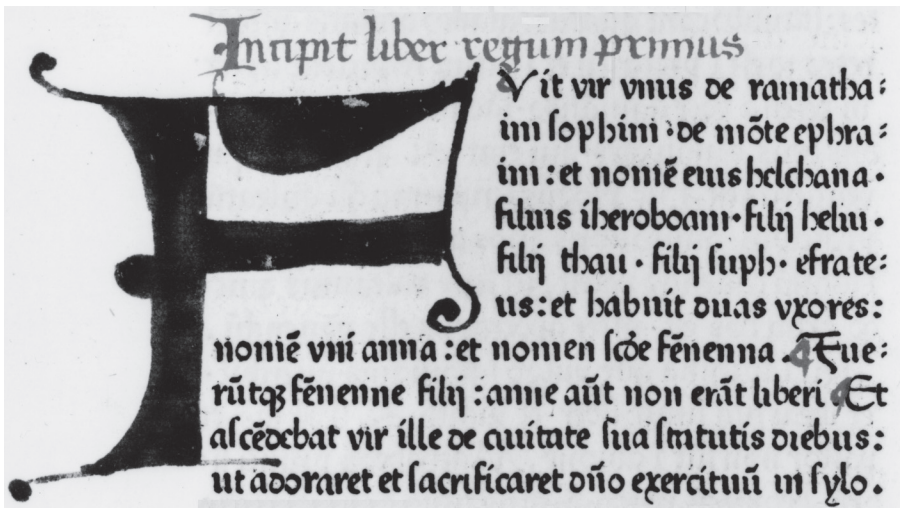
The illustrations reproduce, at actual size, the same passage in each of the Bibles, the beginning of 1 Samuel (first book of Kings, by the Latin Vulgate nomenclature): "There was a certain man of Ramathaim Sophim, in the hills of

Ephraim, and his name was Helchana. . . ." In the Gutenberg Bible, the heading for the book, "Incipit primus liber regum capitulum primum," is printed in red.

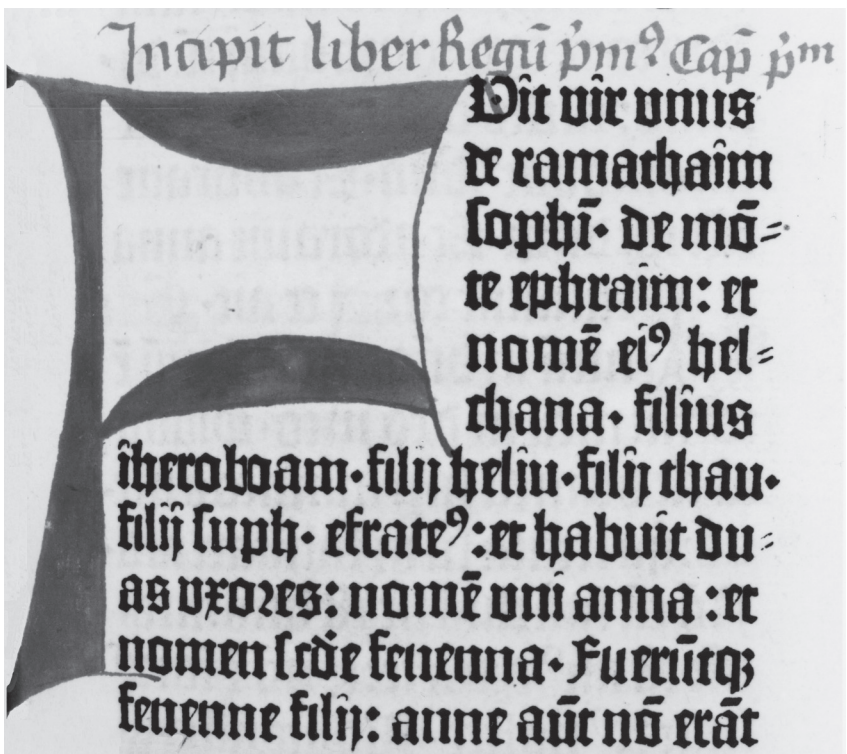


1. Gutenberg Bible, vol. 1, fo. 129v

ii. Mentelin Bible, fo. 86v.



iii. 36-line Bible, [vol. 1], fo. 180.



iv. 1462 Bible, vol. 1, fo. 97.

