

# British typography from Caxton to Morris

Autor(en): **Jones, Herbert**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Stultifera navis : Mitteilungsblatt der Schweizerischen Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft = bulletin de la Société Suisse des Bibliophiles**

Band (Jahr): **6 (1949)**

Heft 3-4

PDF erstellt am: **23.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-387632>

## **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

## **Haftungsausschluss**

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

Im ersten Kappeler Krieg verfaßte Stumpf im Feldlager der Zürcher das Lied: «ker dich zu uns o höchster Gott»<sup>9</sup>. In seiner Gemeinde allerdings machten ihm seine andersgläubigen Miteidgenossen wenig zu schaffen, ganz einfach darum, weil keine da waren. Um so mehr gab ihm das hohe Lehrgebäude der katholischen Kirche zu tun. Einmal schien er der Mann zu einem groß angelegten Angriff sein zu wollen, denn er versuchte sich, im Unterschied zu seiner sonstigen Predigtweise, in scholastischer Predigtmanier. Er teilte seinen Sermon über das 9. Gebot (du sollst nicht lügen) in vier Hauptteile, den ersten Hauptteil in zwölf Unterteile, um schließlich Päpster und Täufer in einen Kessel zu werfen und davor stehen zu bleiben<sup>10</sup>. Obwohl er die Gegenseite Punkt für Punkt, von der Wallfahrt bis zum Fegfeuer, von der Anrufung der Heiligen

bis zu den Konzilien aufrollte, vermochte er diesem «sermo contra Papistas» keinen Schluß abzugewinnen, weshalb er es inskünftig bleiben ließ, sich in eine Predigtweise einzulassen, wie sie beim Konstanzer Konzil meisterlich geblüht hatte<sup>11</sup>. Er mied fortan das Gestrüpp und Dickicht scholastischer Predigtweise, um sich schlicht und einfach an den Text zu halten und Vers nach Vers auszuschöpfen. War ihm der Text dunkel und unklar, so wurde Johannes Stumpf nicht müde, andere Stellen nachzuschlagen und in der Heiligen Schrift so lange zu forschen, bis er die dunkle Stelle durch hell leuchtende Schriftstellen erklärt fand, getreu der Losung, die Schrift durch die Schrift auszulegen.

Bisher wurden diese Predigtbände des größten Schweizerchronisten nicht beachtet, sie ruhen weiter in den Gewölben der Zentralbibliothek Zürich.

<sup>9</sup> Hist. biogr. Lexikon der Schweiz.

<sup>10</sup> D 115 40ss.

<sup>11</sup> Vgl. P. Arendt, Die Predigt des Konstanzer Konzils, 1933.

## Herbert Jones / *British Typography from Caxton to Morris*<sup>1</sup>

### *Caxton and the Fifteenth Century*



William Caxton, England's first printer, gained his knowledge of printing on the Continent, where he had travelled widely for many years as a wool merchant. In 1471, when he was about fifty years of age, Caxton was living in Cologne and, probably with a printer in that city, took some part in the printing of books. It is certain that a few years later he had moved to Bruges and set up a printing press, and it was here, about 1475, that he printed the first book in the English language, the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, which he had himself translated from the French.

Caxton returned to England in 1476 and set up the first press on English soil at the 'Sign of the Red Pale', near Westminster Abbey, about fifty years after printing had been invented. By the end of the following year he had completed the first book printed in England. This was the *Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosophres*, an English translation of a French translation of an anonymous Latin work. All of Caxton's eight type designs

were of gothic, or black-letter, character. His books had no title-pages. Woodcuts appeared in *The Myrroure of the World*, the first English printed book to be illustrated, and ornamental borders are to be found in *The Fifteen Oes*.

Caxton was not only a producer of books, but translator and editor as well. Before he died in 1491 he had printed about a hundred books, mostly of the popular literature of the period, books that would command a ready sale—tales of chivalry for the wealthy classes, service books for the clergy, and sermons for preachers. His technique was considerably behind that of Continental printers, but in England his work opened the way to the building of a common language for his countrymen.

Caxton's press was continued by Wynkyn de Worde, his principal workman. The books printed by de Worde were similar to those of his late master, but before he died in 1534 he had printed between seven and eight hundred publications, a far greater output than any of his contemporaries. He printed *The Chastising of God's Children*, notable typographically as being the first book printed at Westminster with a title-page, and his

<sup>1</sup> «British Book News», No. 87.

finest production, the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartholomæus Anglicus (about 1496) was the first book to be printed on paper made in England.

Before the end of the fifteenth century there were several other presses working in England: Theodoric Rood at Oxford, the schoolmaster printer at St. Alban's, Julian Notary, John Lettou, William de Machlinia, and others. The best printer in England in his day was Richard Pynson, and although his total output was only half that of de Worde the quality of his printing was superior and his Sarum Missal exhibits both taste and ability. Pynson was appointed printer to Henry VIII and had also the distinction of printing the first book in roman type in England.

#### *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*

State interference led to a deterioration of English printing. Control began as a protection against foreign workers, and not until 1523 was the trade strong enough to ignore foreign competition. The flood of treasonable and heretical books led to the Act of 1538 which forbade the printing of any book without examination and supervision was later continued by the Stationers' Company formed in 1557, under whose charter no one was permitted to print anything for sale unless he were a member of the Company. Until the reign of Henry VIII a large quantity of liturgical books were printed abroad for the English market by French printers, popular English stories were printed at Antwerp, and after the middle of the century religious and controversial books were imported surreptitiously.

In Elizabeth's reign the standards were inferior to those of de Worde and Pynson, and the warring of religious factions hindered improvement. The Court of Star Chamber of 1584 prohibited the setting up of presses, and from the beginning of the Reformation until the Stuart Restoration English typography was stifled; any merit that it possessed was due entirely to Continental influence.

The most important printer of the period was John Day who, under the patronage of Elizabeth's first bishop, Matthew Parker, printed the *Ælfredi Regis Res Gestæ* (1574), the first book to be printed in Anglo-Saxon characters. The typography of this book is superior to almost any other book of the same period, although all the types used in it were imported. His other notable

work was the celebrated *Book of Martyrs* of Foxe, one of the most popular illustrated books of the time. Day had several new forms of type cut, and his work raised English printing to a higher level. A feature of his letter-founding was that he cut roman and italic letters to the same size; there was no uniformity before this time.

The commercial outlook and strict censorship between about 1550 and 1650 strangled progress in both printing and type design. Presses restricted themselves to printing books in English, and scholarly works were imported from the Continent where classics were carefully edited. No press was allowed except in London and in the two university towns of Oxford and Cambridge; in 1637 the Court of Star Chamber limited typefounders to four.

The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 led to a slow revival, and in 1693 the crushing regulations of the Court of Star Chamber were repealed. The influence of the great architect, Sir Christopher Wren, inspired printers as well as other craftsmen. The Oxford University Press imported Dutch types and began to issue books from the Clarendon Press, Oxford, which had been founded on the profits of *The History of the Rebellion* (1641) written by the Earl of Clarendon. This example inspired other printers. By 1649 the number of presses had increased to about sixty, mainly engaged in the printing of controversial pamphlets. The endeavours of the Parliamentary party to curb their freedom led to the publication of *Areopagitica*, John Milton's famous plea for the liberty of unlicensed printing (1644).

#### *William Caslon and John Baskerville and their Influence*

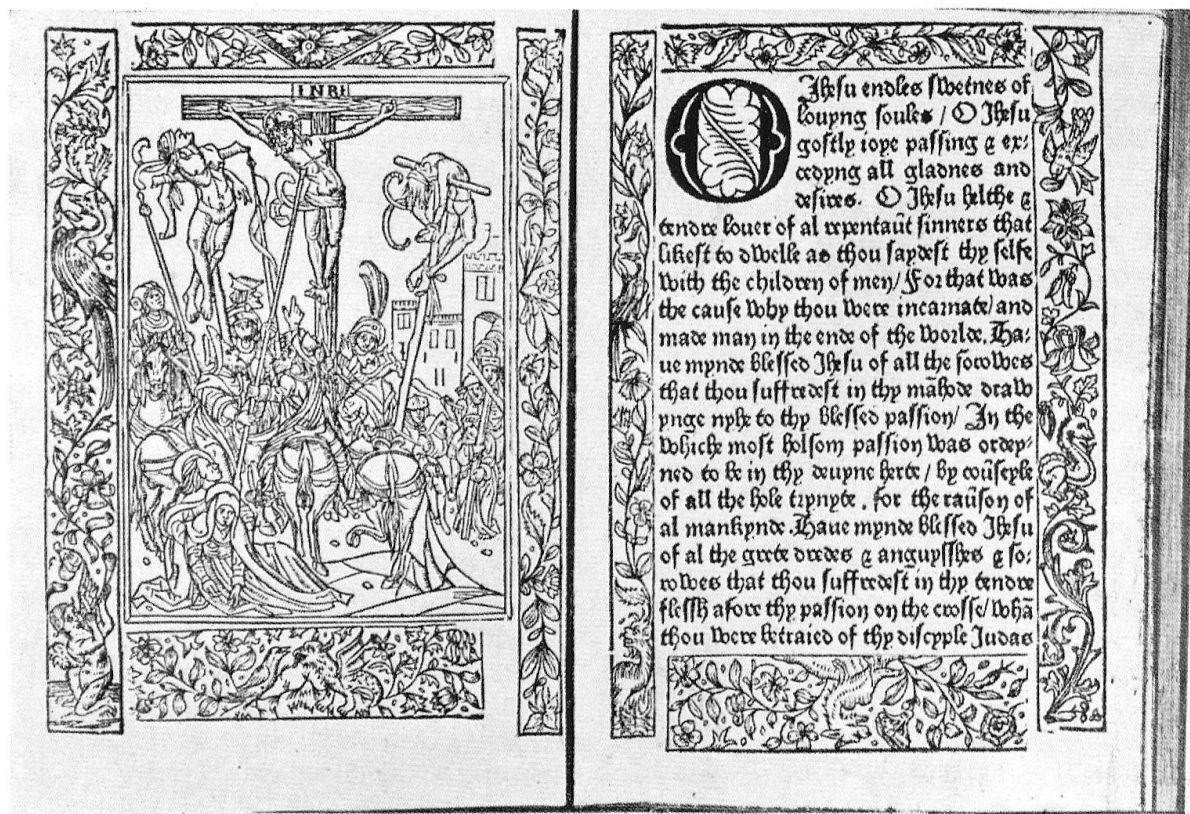
The work of William Caslon (1692–1766), the first great English type-founder, ended the importation of Dutch types and changed the course of English typography. Between 1720 and 1734 he cut a series of type designs for the publisher William Bowyer based on Dutch models. The charm of Caslon's 'Old Face' lies in the shape and proportion of the letters, to the lower-case of which he gave a certain increased roundness of form. Its beauty was quickly recognized, and it has remained popular (with a temporary eclipse between 1780 and 1850) to this day.

John Baskerville weaned printers in England from the practice of imitating the heavy Dutch fashions in type design, freed England from the

Continental influence that had existed since Caxton's day, and eventually became an influence himself on Didot the Frenchman and Bodoni the Italian.

Baskerville's types derive from a wholly native tradition; he was a proficient calligrapher and stone-cutter, and based his designs on a letter-form that had appeared in English writing books

design and generously spaced pages set up standards of taste that later extended to a wider public and paved the way for the *Shakespeare* and *Poets* issued from 1785 in small format by John Bell, to whom is attributed the abolition of the long 's'. Bell had his own type engraved by Martin in 1788 for use in larger publications, and the century ended with fine printing at last established



*The Fifteen Oes, printed by William Caxton, England's first printer (Westminster, 1490); one of his comparatively rare illustrated books*

almost half a century earlier. Fournier, the famous French typesetter, wrote of him: 'His types are cut with much spirit, his Italic being the best in any foundry in England ... his editions printed from these new types ... are real masterpieces'. His *Bible* of 1763, the finest since the famous Gutenberg *Bible*, surpassed that of Robert Estienne (Paris, 1532), and was only equalled much later by the *Doves Bible* (1903-5). His reputation is due not only to the excellence of his type, but also to the importance which he properly attached to choice of paper and quality of ink.

The influence of his letter can be traced in all modern faces that followed. His round, open type

in Britain of a standard that compared favourably with any productions of the Continent.

Between 1742 and 1776 the brothers Foulis, in Glasgow, issued a number of distinctive volumes of classic authors in types cut by Alexander Wilson and based on those of Baskerville. The closing years of the century saw the fruit of Baskerville's influence on the work of the Frys and Joseph Pine and notably William Bulmer and William Bensley, and their high standard of technical craftsmanship represents one of the finest periods of British typography. The wood-engravings of the Bewicks demanded more brilliant typographic expression, and William

A N  
A P O L O G Y  
F O R T H E  
True Christian Divinity,  
B E I N G A N  
E X P L A N A T I O N and V I N D I C A T I O N  
O F T H E  
P R I N C I P L E S and D O C T R I N E S  
Of the P E O P L E called  
Q U A K E R S .

Written in L A T I N and E N G L I S H  
By R O B E R T B A R C L A Y,  
And since translated into H I G H D U T C H, L O W D U T C H, F R E N C H,  
and S P A N I S H, for the Information of Strangers.

The E I G H T H E D I T I O N in E N G L I S H.

B I R M I N G H A M;  
Printed by J O H N B A S K E R V I L L E, and sold by the Bookfellers of  
L O N D O N and W E S T M I N S T E R.  
M D C C L X V.

*An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, printed by John Baskerville (Birmingham, 1765), who emancipated the English printer from emulating Dutch fashions and won continental prestige*

Martin, who had learnt his art in Baskerville's foundry, cut types of sharper cut for the books produced by the Boydells, the Nicols, and Bulmer, such as the Boydell *Shakespeare* (1791), the *Holbein* (1792), the *Milton* (1794-97), the *Poems of Goldsmith and Parnell* (1795), Somerville's *Chace* (1796), Macklin's *Bible*, and others.

### *The Nineteenth Century*

One of the greatest achievements at the opening of the nineteenth century was Dibdin's *Bibliographical Decameron* printed by Bulmer in 1817. The typography is above reproach and the press-work excellent.

The final phase of a fine period is seen in the types issued by the Wilson foundry in Glasgow in 1833. After this time the sharpness of contrast between thick and thin strokes becomes over-emphasized. The mechanization of printing processes in the early nineteenth century created the commercial book and the emphasis on technique led to a decline in standards. The effect of these and other inventions led the House of Commons to consider means of extending knowledge of the arts among the people, and began the movement towards the study of the arts and crafts which was fostered by the 1851 Exhibition and the Oxford Movement. The rise of special type forms of heavy design for bills and announcements also influenced book types and Hansard, writing in 1825, notes the disuse of Caslon's types in favour of those which are 'truly disgusting'. Improvement was introduced by the Whittinghams at the Chiswick Press in the books published by William Pickering, and gradually Caslon's types were revived in books with renaissance borders showing the influence of the romantic Gothic revival of Pugin. The later books of Pickering are less stylized and reach a high standard both of design and technique. William Morris, who founded the Kelmscott Press in 1891, also influenced by the Oxford Movement, claimed that craftsmanship and industrialism could work together, and his reinstatement of good standards, although archaistic, attracted public attention, but distracted attention from the example of Pickering and the revival of Caslon's types. Pickering's example, seen in the Aldine Poets, Walton's *Compleat Angler*, and Sallust's *Opera*, was thus largely lost. Nevertheless, good work was done by such commercial houses as the Ballantyne Press of Edinburgh, the Arden Press, the charm-

ing volumes printed by C. H. O. Daniel in the Fell<sup>1</sup> types, the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* of Herbert Horne (who designed types), and, above all, by the presses inspired by Morris.

Morris, perhaps, departed from the principles that he enunciated in writing, for books are made primarily to be read. His Golden type was based on the fine roman letter of Nicolas Jenson, the fifteenth-century Venetian printer, but, whereas Jenson's letter is simple and legible, Morris's is only partially legible, and when overloaded with the decoration of which Morris was so fond, superb though that decoration may be, his page is hard to read. Morris saw the type page as a solid black mass, even inserting floret decorations to prevent white spaces from appearing in the line. His Troy and Chaucer types, two sizes of a simplified Gothic character, show the influence of early German founts, and are too archaic for modern eyes. Between 1891 and 1897, Morris produced fifty-three books of monumental richness, among which the highly extolled *Chaucer* takes first place. Although they are achievements in decorative art rather than in typography, the Kelmscott books are examples of excellent craftsmanship. Had their example been lost, they would have remained only as specimens of an exotic phase in bookmaking. Fortunately, Morris's ideals were continued by others, and it may be said that his finest work is seen by its influence on the work of the Doves Press of Cobden-Sanderson and Emery Walker.

The Doves Press was probably the finest of the presses influenced by the Morris revival of fine printing, and its products exhibit restraint, simplicity, and consistency. The Doves type was designed by Emery Walker and based on the Jenson letter which Morris, in his Golden type, had spoiled by giving it a black-letter twist. The Doves type adhered closely to its Jenson model and retained the peculiar charm of the original. The masterpiece of this Press was the Doves *Bible* issued in five large quarto volumes (1903-5). It has no interlinear space, no paragraphs, and the only decoration used is in the initial letters, which add to the beauty of the page without disturbing its readability.

Mr. C. H. St. John Hornby's Ashendene Press produced books of great beauty, notably the *Dante*, the *Boccaccio*, and the *Morte Darthur*, which

<sup>1</sup> In 1667 Dr. John Fell established a type-foundry for the Oxford University Press, employing Dutch models for the types, which are still called after him.

POEMS  
BY  
GOLDSMITH  
AND  
PARNELL.



LONDON:  

---

---

  
PRINTED BY W. BULMER AND CO.  
**Shakspeare Printing-Office,**  
CLEVELAND-ROW.  
1804.

*Poems by Goldsmith and Parnell, illustrated with wood engravings by John and Thomas Bewick, and printed by William Bulmer (London, 1795); a delightful volume, wholly English in its design and exhibiting high technical craftsmanship*

are printed in a bold, well-balanced type modelled after that of Sweynheym and Pannartz, the first printers in Italy. Others have been attended with less success and, in general, it may be said that the types designed for these private presses have achieved little because their individuality is unsuitable for everyday reading, and they fail in the primary purpose for which types must be designed, i. e., to be read easily, comfortably, and quickly.

In spite of the success of the Arts and Crafts Movement and its Exhibition in 1888, Morris's

contention that ornament should form an integral part of the book, and the intention of the movement to link art with industry, the effect was to exclude machinery in favour of handicraft. This division in aim was not reconciled until the formation of the Design and Industries Association who claimed that machinery, properly used, could satisfy both designer and manufacturer and that sound design was not only essential to technical excellence but tended towards economy in production, and, in effect, restated the doctrine of Morris without emulating his practice.

## *Walter Kern | Gottfried Kellers «Die Johannisnacht»*

### *Ein Druck für Bibliophile*

Die Zunftgesellschaft zur Schmieden – wie Gottfried Keller noch schrieb, bevor es neuerdings zu dem kurzen zürcherischen «Schmiden» wurde – weihte 1875 einen neuen Becher ein und Gottfried Keller wurde mit der Schaffung des Festspieles zu diesem Ereignis beauftragt, das heute unter dem Titel «Die Johannisnacht, Festspiel bei der Becherweihe der zürcherischen Zunftgesellschaft zur Schmieden 1876» in seine gesammelten Werke aufgenommen ist. Also eine Gelegenheitsdichtung, doch mit dem Ewigkeitszug, der eine bibliophile Ausgabe rechtfertigt. Damit ist neben Kellers «Ursula», das seinerzeit Otto Baumberger mit bekannter Meisterhand illustrierte, in der Reihe der Zürcher Drucke der Offizin Gebr. Fretz AG. in Zürich ein zweites Keller-Bändchen erschienen, dessen Druck aus Kreisen der Zunft angeregt und unter Leitung des Zünfters Hans Fretz hergestellt wurde. Die Illustrationen schuf diesmal Charles Hug. Der Druck erfolgte auf feines Büttenpapier, und der kräftige Papp-Einband ist mit Vergé-Bütten überzogen. Als Schrift wurde die edle Lutetia-Antiqua verwendet. Die Exemplare 1–100 sind für die Zunft zur Schmieden reserviert und die Nummern 101–800 sind im Handel. Weitere 50 Exemplare I–L sind für die persönliche Verwendung der Hersteller.

Soweit die sachlichen, den Bibliophilen interessierenden Angaben, denen noch beigelegt sei, daß der Druck in kombiniertem Buch- und Offsetdruck ausgeführt wurde.

Carl Helbling gibt in einer knappen Einleitung das Wissenswerte über den äußern Anlaß der Entstehung und den Gehalt des Festspieles, in der er mit Recht die schöne Vision Kellers rühmt, der in diesen, aus einer bewegten geschichtlichen Vergangenheit heraufbeschworenen und in ihre angestammte Heimat zurückkehrenden Geistern, eine Verbindung des Vergangenen mit dem Künftigen schafft. Die farbenreiche Dichtung ist wesentlicher Ausdruck von Kellers Phantasie und seiner weiten Schau über das Spiel des Lebens als einem Taumel des Vergänglichen. Daß er sie selbst als vollwertige Dichtung betrachtete und daran dachte, sie in seine gesammelten Werke aufzunehmen, geht aus einem Dankbrief des Dichters an die Zunft vom Dezember 1875 hervor, die ihm ihre Erkenntlichkeit durch Übersendung eines Kupferstiches erwies. Er schrieb in seiner zurückhaltenden Art, daß es nicht seine Meinung gewesen sei, die Becherweihe mit diesem Festgedicht so wesentlich verteuern zu helfen, da es «seine industrielle Verwertung später von selbst finden wird».

Nun hat es in dieser schönen Ausgabe noch eine weitere, nicht industrielle, doch ästhetische Verwertung zur Freude der Zünfter und Bücherfreunde gefunden. Die 18 Lithographien von Charles Hug fangen mit schwebender Hand die Visionen des Dichters ein, und man ist versucht, von einer kongenialen graphischen Phantasie Hugs zu sprechen, die mit andern Ausdrucksmitteln, mit der Kellerschen Vorstellungskraft und Bilderfülle wetteifert. Auch hier wieder zeigt