

Institution: University of Sheffield
Unit of Assessment: 33 - Theology and Religious Studies
Title of case study: Changing Perceptions of King James' Bible
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Utilising the pioneering research in reception history at the University of Sheffield, and in partnership with Sheffield Cathedral and Museums Sheffield, exhibition materials and educational guides were designed for the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible in 2011. These educational outreach materials were used by 30 English cathedrals and other greater churches throughout the UK, and the Church of England would not otherwise have been able to develop them; significantly, the material's content deliberately cut across many National Curriculum disciplines to provide teachers with a multifaceted resource. Taking feedback from Sheffield Cathedral as sample evidence, all participants in the adult education outreach programme registered changed perceptions of the King James Bible following engagement with the resources and the exhibition.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The exhibition and educational resources were primarily focused on the use and influence of biblical texts. Up until the past ten years, research on the reception of the Bible in the arts, literature, politics, and popular culture was rarely undertaken outside Sheffield, at least not in any sustained way, and the 'original' context and theological interpretation were the dominant emphases in the field. The Department of Biblical Studies pioneered research in reception history over the past twenty years through individual researchers, past (e.g. David Clines, Philip Davies, Cheryl Exum, Stephen Moore, Jorunn Økland, Keith Whitelam) and present (Pyper, Crossley, Finney, Chalcraft, and Edwards), research centres (Bible and Cultural Studies [completed 2000]) and the Bible and the Modern World [2000-2009]), and the founding (2012) of the journal, <i>Biblical Reception</i>, by Sheffield Phoenix Press (with Crossley on the editorial board). In addition to over 30 publications, Sheffield hosted the Cultural Studies/Biblical Studies colloquium in 1997, bringing together a number of international experts. The proceedings were published in 1998 (edited by Moore and Exum) in what is widely regarded as a landmark publication in the field. In 2011, Crossley published an open access article with <i>Relegere</i> (with over 1500 downloads) placing reception history at the heart of a manifesto for Biblical Studies. The distinctively 'Sheffield' contribution and approach to biblical reception has shown how biblical texts have survived and transformed in both 'secular' and 'religious' contexts while intersecting with gender, nationalism, ethnicity, and politics. Though this approach has helped transform Biblical Studies into a field of study far broader than it was twenty years ago, there remains no major centre in the UK other than Sheffield with such a concentration of expertise in areas relating to the use and influence of the Bible.</p> <p>Crossley and Pyper (along with the Project Coordinator, Iona Hine) were responsible for writing the exhibition boards and educational resources in light of Sheffield's distinctive approach and their own specific research between 2005 and 2011. During this period, Pyper's research had used memetics in order to show the ways in which the Bible, including the King James Version, has survived and grown over the centuries through translations, editions and canons, thus generating its own means of survival [R1]. He has also shown how the Bible has been adapted in language, literature, children's literature, postcolonial contexts, sport, politics, nationalism, and the arts, and how such cultural appropriations defy dominance by religious and secular groups [R1, R2]. During this same period, Crossley analysed the ways in which the biblical texts have been embedded in dominant ideological discourses in Britain and America, covering uses by prominent public intellectuals or politicians through to more 'obscure' figures, including the King James Version-only</p>

American 'fundamentalist' preacher Peter Ruckman [R3, R3, R4]. These ideas of the embedded nature of biblical texts, and their survival, underpinned the overarching narrative of the reception of the Bible in the exhibition materials, and specific examples from the research of Crossley and Pyper (e.g. Ruckman, children's literature, politicians, colonialism) were used in the exhibition materials.

To help facilitate the impact of this research, Crossley and Pyper were successful in acquiring funding. A £9,704 award from the Knowledge Transfer Rapid Response Fund (University of Sheffield, June 2010-June 2011; PI: Crossley) was granted for funding the Project Coordinator (Hine) and the generation of the exhibition resources and educational guides. A £10,784 HEIF-4 Knowledge Transfer award (May 2010-May 2011; PI: Crossley) was made available for a conference for teachers and educationalists on biblical literacy (May 2011). A £3850 Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies award (July 2010-January 2011; PIs: Crossley and Pyper) was secured for the collaboration with Museums Sheffield in order to help develop the educational resources.

Papers relating to additional research carried out for the cathedral resources were presented to, and discussed with, academics, educationalists and cathedral outreach officers at the May 2011 conference. These were then written up for a special edition of *Postscripts* (edited by Crossley and Hine) which reflected on the conference [R5]. Crossley's contribution focused on the ways in which the King James Bible, especially its idiomatic language, has been understood in the context of liberal capitalism and democracy, allowing him to show that its survival is linked with the impression that it represents English nationalism and the related values of democracy, tolerance and freedom. Crossley's paper—initially prepared in 2011 and revised in 2012 for publication- was a more detailed and analytical expression of that which was developed for the exhibition materials.

3. References to the research

- R1. Hugh Pyper, *An Unsuitable Book: Bible as Scandalous Text* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2005); submitted to RAE 2008
- R2. Hugh Pyper, *The Unchained Bible: Cultural Appropriations of Biblical Texts* (London: T&T Clark, 2012) [this book collected research carried out and presented nationally and internationally between 2005-2011]; submitted REF 2014
- R3. James Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Projects for a New American Century* (London: Equinox, 2008); submitted RAE 2008
- R4. James Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism: Quests, Scholarship and Ideology* (Durham: Acumen, 2012) [the research for, and final draft of, this book were completed by 2011]; submitted REF 2014
- R5. James Crossley, 'Biblical Literacy and the English King James Liberal Bible: A Twenty-First Century Tale of Capitalism, Nationalism and Nostalgia', *Postscripts* (forthcoming; available publicly in advance in the White Rose Repository)

4. Details of the impact

Sheffield's collaboration with the English Cathedrals originated in 2009 when Pyper and Crossley began informal discussions with the 2011 Cathedral Sub-Group. There was enthusiastic agreement for Sheffield to provide exhibition and educational resources based specifically on the distinctive departmental approach to the reception of the King James Bible rather than simply its seventeenth-century origins. The Sub-Group and the King James Bible Trust (www.kingjamesbibletrust.org) were particularly enthusiastic because most English cathedrals lacked the intellectual and financial resources for this landmark anniversary [S2]. According to the

then new Director of the King James Bible Trust, the resources offered by Sheffield, 'gladden my heart...I can say without hesitation that we would be grateful to make extensive use of these resources throughout the year - indeed, even before.' [S1]. In 2010, Pyper and Crossley, along with Hine, wrote the exhibition and educational resources which were then discussed with Sheffield Cathedral [S2] and Museums Sheffield in order to make them suitable for the National Curriculum, adult education and museum audiences. The Humanities Research Institute at the University of Sheffield provided access to their Exhibitor software package so that the exhibition resources could be made available as an interactive DVD.

The overtly interdisciplinary and reception-historical approaches to Biblical Studies at Sheffield made it possible for the exhibition and education resources to cut across educational disciplines, including those listed in the National Curriculum (Art, Citizenship, English Language, English Literature, Geography, History, Music, R.E., and Technology). The specific research of Pyper and Crossley was particularly shown in the following major topics in the resources for the educational outreach programmes at each cathedral:

- controversial texts and 'wars of translation'
- the Bible and nationalism, including English and Scottish nationalism
- the use of the Bible in Empire, colonization, justifications for slavery, and even as source of liberation
- the King James Bible in the United States, and its influence on American politics
- 'KJV-only-ism', Peter Ruckman and their place in American culture
- the Bible in the Arts, namely its depiction and interpretation in music, literature, sports, visual arts, and popular culture
- the ongoing use of KJV idioms
- different versions of the Bible which developed and survived as the influence of the King James Bible was seemingly in decline

While the exhibition was promoted in North America by the Society of Biblical Literature, one of the most popular biblical studies blogs, and a Knoxville newspaper [S6, S7, S8], English cathedrals and their visitors were the main beneficiaries [e.g. S4, S5, S9]. *Telling Tales* exhibitions were available at 30 English cathedrals and some greater churches throughout the UK, with displays lasting from one week to 12 months. Organisation varied locally. For instance, major venues such as Canterbury Cathedral held extended 12 month exhibitions while the exhibition was taken on tour around the Diocese of Llandaff (Church in Wales) throughout 2011. Resources were made available for free download on the departmental webpages. On these webpages, images of the exhibitions at churches and cathedrals were also provided, as well as the locations of, and information about, the exhibitions:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/kjv/exhibition/locations>

The resources and accompanying new research were presented to the conference, *Biblical Literacy and the Curriculum: Celebrating 400 Years of the King James Bible* (University of Sheffield, May 2011). The conference was aimed at teachers, educationalists and cathedral outreach officers and there were about 100 participants. Each participant involved was provided with a copy of the DVD and sessions were led by Crossley, Pyper and Hine to discuss the ways in which the reception of the Bible could be, or was being, used in teaching and the curriculum. This included research presented by Crossley which has since been revised for publication.

It is impossible to know the number of visitors who saw the exhibition, or what proportion visited cathedrals because of the exhibitions. However, there are some general figures about Cathedral visitors which indicate the scope of the impact made by the resources that Sheffield provided to an audience otherwise unfamiliar with their contents. In 2004, the English Heritage and the

Association of English Cathedrals jointly launched a report on *The Economic and Social Impacts of Cathedrals in England*. According to the report, almost 9 million people visited England's 42 Anglican cathedrals annually (compare 6.2 million people visiting Blackpool Pleasure Beach, 3.7 million people visiting the London Eye and 4.5 million people visiting the British Museum in 2003), with more than 300,000 organised educational visits annually.

(<http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/content/pub/CathedralsresearchHeritageCount2004.doc>).

Sheffield Cathedral's adult educational outreach programme was used as a specific test case for analysing changing perceptions [S3]. Feedback sheets were completed by all participants and covered questions including: 'Did the course fulfil its stated aims?'; 'What did you know about the King James Version after the course that you did not know before?'; 'Name one other thing you learned during the course'; and 'How would you rate the exhibition on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent?' The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Every participant believed that the course fulfilled its stated aims and every participant listed something new they had learnt. All evaluations of the exhibitions materials were ranked 3-5, with nothing lower. On things learnt and appreciated, comments included: '*Just one? Difficult to choose*'; '*Its fascinating impact on English and world history through colonial and missionary use; the complexity of translating accurately...The exhibition was excellent, most informative*'; '*Problems for translators...bias caused by belief/political situations*'; '*The biblical origin of some everyday expressions*'; '*I did not know as much as I previously thought I did*'; '*it reflects a political stance about authority...I enjoyed all of it*'; '*that language in subsequent translations of the Bible reflected the society and outlook of those to whom the "new" translation was directed. Fascinating!...It was all very interesting*'; '*how the Bible has influenced our culture and "idiom"*'; '*A LOT!...the subtlety of what appears to be very modest changes in translation between versions of the Bible – and the origins of the NIV!*'; '*I had not realised that so many of our common sayings come from the KJV...I liked it all*'; '*that we were not only looking backwards to the KJV but that there was an input into the reading of the Bible today*'; '*a realisation of the difficulties of translation*'; and '*the scholarship, the history and the various interpretations of the Scriptures. I enjoyed and appreciated all the course in equal measure*'.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1. Director of the King James Bible Trust (<http://www.kingjamesbibletrust.org/>).
- S2. Chair of the Cathedral Committee (minutes available on the approach to the University of Sheffield to provide exhibition resources)
- S3. Education and Learning Director, Sheffield Cathedral
- S4. Report on *Telling Tales* on the Sheffield Cathedral website (<http://www.sheffieldcathedral.org/events/king-james-bible.php>)
- S5. Strong recommendations by the Bishop of Worcester for the Worcester Diocese to use the resources (http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/pdf_lib/482.pdf)
- S6. <http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/2011KJV.aspx> provides information on the website of the Society of Biblical Literature (approximately 9000 members)
- S7. Report in the *Knoxville Examiner* (<http://www.examiner.com/christianity-culture-in-knoxville/the-400th-anniversary-of-the-king-james-bible>)
- S8. Recommendation by the popular (about 6000 hits per day) biblical studies blog, *Zwinglius Redivivus* (<http://zwingliusredivivus.wordpress.com/2011/03/09/telling-tales-discussing-the-kjv-bible-on-its-400th-anniversary/>)
- S9. <http://www.kingjamesbibletrust.org/community/resources-for-churches>, a link to the exhibition resources on the King James Bible Trust website