

Maria Regina Angliæ: A Gift for a Tudor Queen



New College Library, Oxford, BT3.145.20 [detail]

One of the undoubted jewels amongst the various magnificent collections owned by New College is that of the manuscripts and printed books held by the Library. Significantly, many of these, ranging in date from the eleventh to the nineteenth centuries, retain their contemporary bindings, consisting of either vellum- or leather-covered wooden boards with, in certain cases, attractive or even elaborate rolled and stamped decorations. Notable examples include: a 1512 edition of Julius Caesar's Commentaries (BT1.127.9) with a highly distinctive and unusual binding incorporating threads of gold and silver stitched into the leather-covered boards; and an edition of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press in 1893 (BT1.128.4), which has a vellum binding and an embroidered cloth satchel.

One of the very finest bindings adorns a copy of *Einfältiges Bedenken, worauf eine christliche, im Worte Gottes gegründete Reformation ... anzurichten sei* (MS 136). This work, accredited to the archbishop-elect of Cologne, Hermann von Wied (1477-1552) and printed in Cologne in 1543, set out a proposal for how the diocese of Cologne might be reformed along the Protestant principles laid down by Martin Luther. However, the significance of the New College volume is that the printed book is preceded by a manuscript translation of some of the text into Latin by the Dutch scholar Wouter Deleen (c. 1500-1563), a naturalized member of the court of Henry VIII.¹ Deleen intended the volume to be presented to Henry himself and, to this end, not only prefaced his translation with a dedication to Henry, but also commissioned from the so-called Flamboyant Binder a lavish work of gold-tooled roll and patterns, including Tudor roses, royal insignia and Henry's arms. Lettered panels on both boards, incorporating the date 1545, Henry's name and his titles, complete the extravagance. It is unknown whether the volume ever reached Henry's hands or, indeed, precisely how and when it found its way into the possession of New College. Curiously, however, and rather less well-known, the Library owns an interesting companion piece to the Deleen volume.

¹ For a detailed discussion of this item, and Deleen himself, see the article '[The King's Eye](#)' by James Willoughby, *New College Notes* 6 (2015), no. 11.



New College Library, Oxford, MS 136

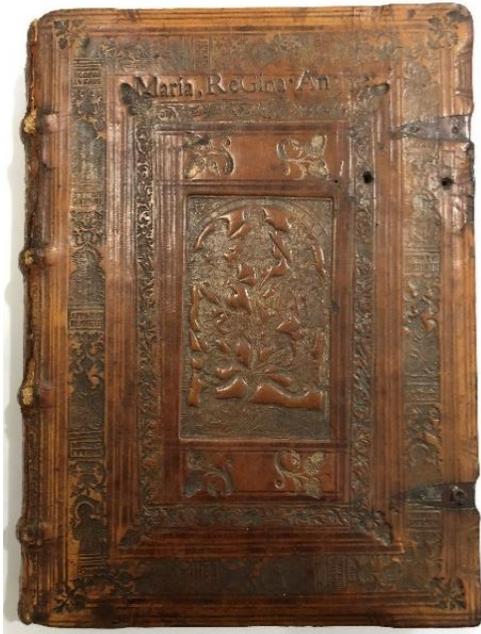
De retinenda fide orthodoxa & catholica adversus haereses & sectas, & praecipue Lutheranam, libri IX (BT3.145.20) is a book by Johann Slotan (Joannes Slotanus), also printed in Cologne but twelve years later, in 1555. Born in Geffen, a municipality in the Dutch province of North Brabant, Slotan had joined the Dominican order in Cologne around the year 1525. He taught sacred letters and, in 1554, received a doctorate in theology.² Having been appointed Prior of his convent, Slotan served as papal inquisitor for the ecclesiastical province of Mainz, Cologne and Trier, prosecuting the humanist and preacher Justus Velsius (*c.* 1510-*c.* 1581) in 1556. Following his departure from Cologne, Velsius published several works (*Apologia Iustii Velsii Hagani* in 1556 and *Epistolae* in 1557) which elicited responses in kind from Slotan (*Apologiae Iustii Velsii Hagani confutatio* (1557) and *Disputationes adversus haereticos liber unus* (1558)), condemning all such heretical doctrines. A staunch defender of the Catholic faith, Slotan died in Cologne on 9 July 1560.³

The theme of the text of *De retinenda fide orthodoxa* is diametrically opposed to that of the Deleen volume delivering, unsurprisingly, a polemic outlining the supremacy of Catholicism over Lutheran heresy. By 1555, following the break from Rome and the establishment of the King as head of the Church, the Protestant England of Henry VIII and that of his son Edward VI, had reverted to the Catholic faith. This move came with the accession of Henry's daughter Mary as Queen in 1553 and the subsequent restoration of papal authority to England in November 1554. Slotan subsequently dedicated his book jointly to Mary and her husband, Philip of Spain.

² Charles J. Callan, 'John Slotanus' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann *et al.*, vol. 14 (New York: Robert Appleton, 1913).

³ *ibid.*

The copy of the book in New College Library was, much like the Deleen copy of *Einfältiges Bedenken*, clearly intended to be presented to the monarch. In similar manner, the leather binding has an elaborate panel design, created using rolls, ornaments and panel stamps. While faded on the upper board, the lower board still has the traces of the gold-tooling which would have adorned the book and shown it to be an item of importance. As the Deleen volume was inscribed with Henry's name and titles, so too this book has Mary's name stamped on the upper board: 'Maria. ReGina. Angliæ': Mary Queen of England. Adding to the prestigious nature of the item, the textblock edges are gauffered, whereby heated rolls have indented a running pattern along the edges, which are also gilded. While no longer present, clasps were evidently once fitted to the outer edges; marbled end papers inside the book, seemingly a later addition (the chain-holes inside the upper board are covered by the pastedown), add a finishing touch.



New College Library, Oxford, BT3.145.20



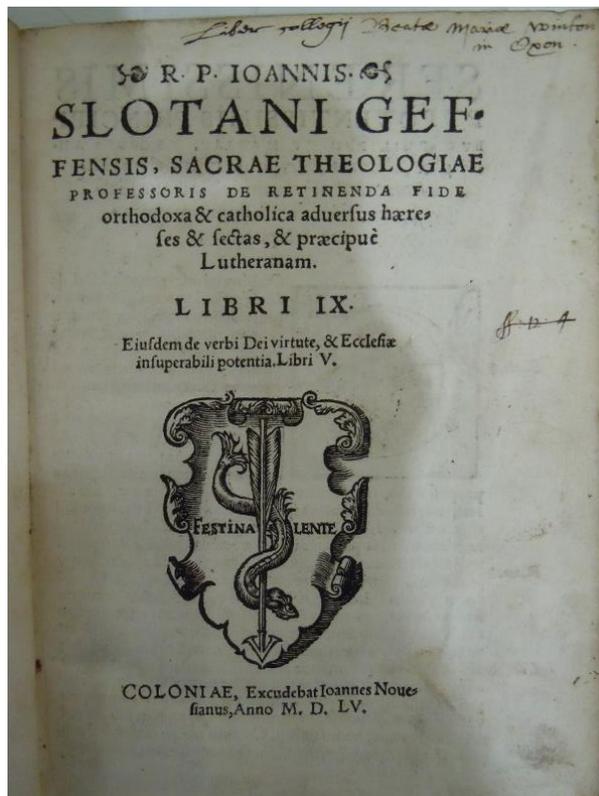
New College Library, Oxford, BT3.145.20 [detail: gauffered edges]

This item has been included in a study by Valerie Schutte of the contemporary books and manuscripts which were dedicated to Mary, and jointly to both Mary and Philip.⁴ Given the nature of the text it would appear that Slotan, in dedicating the book to both of them, was honouring them for the restoration of the Catholic faith to England and their continuing opposition to heresy. However, Schutte suggests a possible alternative motive.

⁴ Valerie Schutte, *Mary I and the Art of Book Dedications* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

It had been announced, on 28 November 1554, that Mary was pregnant. The book's dedication date of 4 April 1555, Schutte argues, indicates it may be more likely that this is what Slotan wanted to celebrate—the impending birth of Mary and Philip's child. Schutte thus suggests that this presentation copy may have originated from Slotan himself (it is 'the presentation copy of Slotan's text intended for Mary').⁵ However, by July 1555, it had transpired that Mary was not, after all, expecting a child. Schutte contends that, if the intention of the presentation was to honour Mary and Philip's dedication to the Catholic faith, the queen may have accepted the book. However, any gift given that was intended to celebrate the baby's arrival would, in the circumstances, most likely have been either refused or not presented in the first place—hence the fact that the book would appear to have never been in Mary's possession. Certainly, it bears no evidence of any ownership other than that of New College ('Liber collegii Beatae Mariae Winton in Oxon', as inscribed on the title page), and there is no provenance information attached to it.

Like the Deleen volume, it is thus something of a mystery as to how the Slotan book found its way to New College Library. The handwriting of the New College ownership statement would appear to be late sixteenth to seventeenth century in date,⁶ so within a period of 100-150 years at the most of the book's publication. In the absence of solid provenance, a study of past library catalogues may help to give a more precise indication as to when College took possession of it. Today, five shelfmarks are inscribed on the book, four on the verso of the first end-leaf, including the current one (BT3.145.20). 'Wyatt Library MM.18.3' is written in blue biro (!) so is clearly recent. Of the other three marks, that inscribed on the title page (ff. 12.4) would appear to be the earliest.

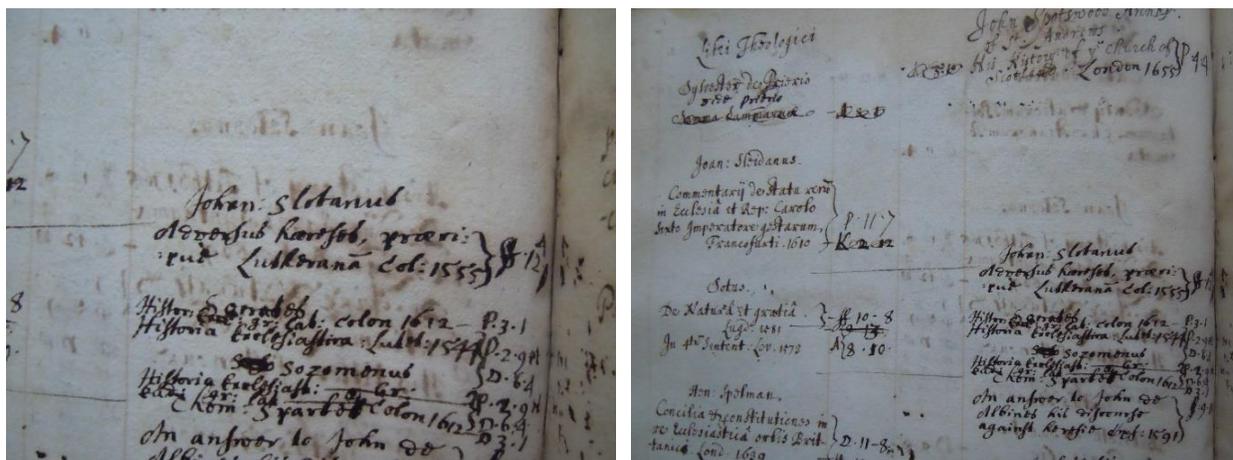


New College Library, Oxford, BT3.145.20, title page

⁵ Schutte, *Mary I*, p. 107

⁶ Acknowledgement is made here to Jennifer Thorp, New College Archivist.

A consultation of the earliest surviving catalogues and classification indexes in the Library, dating back to the seventeenth century, indicates that the *De retinenda fide orthodoxa* is absent from the 1650 (LC/2) catalogue; (that of 1624 (LC/1) is only concerned with manuscripts). It appears that the first time the book was recorded is in the catalogue dated 1654 (*Catalog librorum qui in bibliotheca collegii Beatae Mariae Wintoniensis in Oxō collocant MDCLIV*, LC/3). This bound volume actually appears to consist of two separate indexes. The first, with the 1654 title page and physically smaller pages, is arranged in subject order ('Libri theologici', 'Libri medici' and 'Libri philologici') with alphabetical entries under each, these being written in the left-hand column of the page—the right-hand column was clearly left blank on the initial compilation of the catalogue to accommodate later entries. The second larger index is arranged alphabetically by author and appears to be of later date, perhaps initially compiled around 1700—there are numerous original entries for books printed from the 1670s to the 1690s.

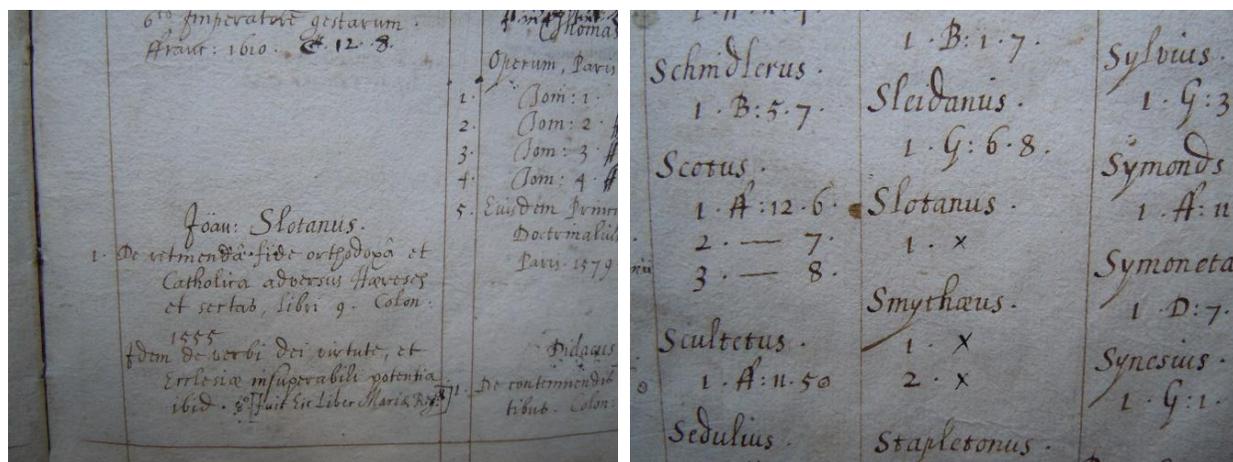


The entry for *De retinenda fide orthodoxa* in:
New College Library catalogue dated 1654
New College Library, Oxford, LC/3

The Slotan book appears under 'Libri theologici' in the 1654 index, the entry reading: 'Johan Slotanus: Adversus haereses praecipue Lutheranā, Col: 1555', with the shelfmark ff.12.4, as found on the title page. It is clearly a somewhat later entry, however, as it is listed on the right-hand side of the page, with a line drawn to indicate its correct position in the alphabetical sequence. The entry for the book in the second alphabetical index only bears the shelfmark M.13.11, which today does not appear on the book.

Entries for the book in further existing library catalogues⁷ allow a sequence of early New College shelfmarks to be compiled: the earliest is undoubtedly ff.12.4; this was superseded by M.11.3, followed by a minor change to M.11.4; M.13.11 is confirmed (in catalogue LC/8) as the latest of the quartet. These shelfmarks, therefore, appear to date in sequence from the initial recording of the book some time after 1654 to the turn of the seventeenth/eighteenth centuries.

⁷ New College Library, Oxford, LC/6, which bears (only roughly inscribed) dates of both 1621 and 1686; New College Library, Oxford, LC/8, which is dated approximately to the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century.



The unclassified entry for the Slotan book in a Library catalogue of the early seventeenth century, in both the main author index (l) and in the shelfmark index (r)
New College Library, Oxford, LC/7

Another entry, however, in a regrettably undated vellum-bound index (LC/7), includes an acknowledgment of the dedication of the book to Mary. This catalogue consists of two distinct parts. The bulk of the volume is an alphabetical author index, in which (at least on the initial compilation) each item under the individual author has been numbered, no matter whether there be a single or multiple entries. These numbers correspond to a separate shelfmark index at the back of the volume, again ordered alphabetically by author, where each number has been allocated a shelfmark—for the most part, at least.

The initial entries in the volume, in both the author and the shelfmark indexes, appear to be the work of one person, as the handwriting is consistently uniform. The initial entries in the main author index have been subsequently augmented by other individuals, as evidenced by the differing styles of handwriting, with entries for new items and/or the insertion of new shelfmarks for existing ones.

There are a couple of interesting points to note about this catalogue. Firstly, not every numbered item was allocated a shelfmark in the second index—a small proportion simply have an ‘X’ inscribed next to them indicating that, for whatever reason, they were deliberately left unclassified. Neither have any of these items had new shelfmarks inserted in subsequent years. These books may constitute a list of titles that the Librarian, or College, wished to keep ‘withdrawn’ from circulation. One of their number is Slotan’s *De retinenda fide orthodoxa*.⁸

Furthermore, no item in what is presumed to be the initial listing of books, with its relatively distinctive handwriting, is dated later than 1626. Entries for items printed from 1627/1628 onwards, and notably all those from the 1630s and beyond, are written in a quite different hand or hands. It is clear, too, that there are only a handful of items dating from the 1640s in the catalogue, several from

⁸ Other titles left unclassified include: *Historia 18 martyrum Cartusianorum Anglorum* [i.e. *Historia martyrii octodecim Cartusianorum Anglorum*] (1608), by Catholic priest and Carthusian monk Maurice Chauncy; two books by Stephen Gardiner, who served as Mary’s Chancellor, including a 1553 English translation of his *De vera obedientia*; Elias Hasenmüller’s history of the Jesuits, *Historia Iesuitici ordinis* (1595); Sir Edwin Sandys’s *A relation of the state of religion* (1605); *Histoire de l’Inquisition d’Espagne* (1568); Johann Boemus’s *Omnium gentium mores, leges et ritus* (1582); *Summa conciliorum et pontificorum* (1600), by Dominican priest Bartolomé Carranza; Samuel Harsnett’s *A declaration of egregious popish impostures* (1603); Richard Smyth’s *Confutatio eorum quae Philippus Melancthon obiicit contra Missae sacrificium propiatorium* (1562) and *Diatriba de hominis justificatione adversum Petrum Martyrem Vermelium nunc apostatum* (1550); and John Donne’s *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610).

1640 and 1641 with the latest being two from 1644, again written in hands other than that which recorded the majority of entries. This would suggest that the catalogue was initially compiled in the 1620s, or at least the latter half of that decade, continuing in use throughout the 1630s, before falling out of use or being superseded sometime in the mid-late 1640s, ultimately by the catalogue of 1654. If this is the case, it would extend the date of arrival of the Slotan book at New College considerably further back in time than the entry in the 1654 catalogue might suggest.

While the evidence is not conclusive, it may be that the Slotan book arrived at New College in the early seventeenth century, if not before, certainly by the mid-1620s, but remained unclassified in Library ownership until some time after 1654 (but well before 1700). A possible reason for the delay may derive from the very nature of the item—it may not have been desirable to draw attention to, much less circulate, a strongly Catholic text and one dedicated to, and actually adorned with the name of, Mary Tudor once England had again become a Protestant nation under Elizabeth and James I. With the demise of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan Protectorate in 1658-1660, it may have been felt that the climate had settled sufficiently for it to be finally added to the catalogue.

In his article on the Deleen volume in *New College Notes*, James Willoughby indicated that the circumstances of how and when that item arrived at New College are also unknown, but that it was certainly present before 1697 as it appears in the union catalogue *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliæ et Hiberniæ*. He went on to say that “The College received many books from the estate of Cardinal Pole, and this is the sort of book, given [former Archbishop Thomas] Cranmer’s interest, that Pole might have found at Lambeth when he was Mary’s archbishop of Canterbury”.⁹ He cast doubt, however, on Cardinal Pole being the source, citing the fact that Pole had not signed the Deleen volume as was his habit, and stating that New College did not receive his Latin texts. As Valerie Schutte suggests, the Slotan volume may have indeed been sent to Mary at the time of her phantom pregnancy when it was either rejected by the Queen herself or possibly kept out of her hands, maybe by protective guardians at Court. While it too bears no signature, is it possible that the book found its way into the possession of Mary’s Archbishop of Canterbury—and, subsequently, into that of New College?

Alternatively, it may genuinely, and simply, have been an acquisition of which no record, for whatever reason, was ever made.

This is, of course, merely idle speculation in the face of a regrettable absence of information and hard fact. It is certainly curious, however, that New College Library should find itself the owner of not one, but *two* books of this kind, so different in terms of content but so alike in nature—elaborate presentation copies intended for the reigning monarch, from roughly the same period in time, and presumably deriving from Royal circles. Might they even have arrived at the same time, from a common source? It is to be hoped that, at some point in the future, more information may yet prove forthcoming.

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⁹ Willoughby, ‘[King’s Eye](#)’, p. 5. Reginald Pole (1500-1558) was a cardinal of the Catholic Church and subsequently the last Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, from 1556 until his death. It was he who, in his capacity as Papal Legate to England, received England back into the Catholic fold in November 1554, and was instrumental to Parliament’s passing of the Revival of the Heresy Acts. He is recorded as a donor to New College in the Library Benefaction book for 1557.