

satisfied by the reading of challenging and well written books.

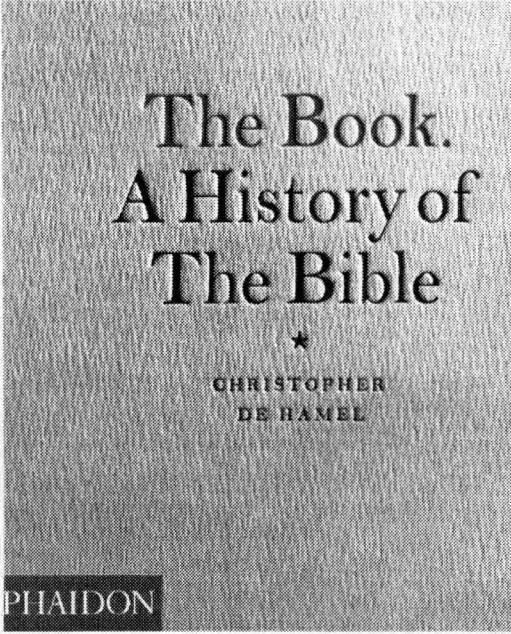
So, to conclude, if you are the sort of serious reader who likes to have your own opinions supported and cosseted by an author then I recommend that you read Section 1 of Sven Birkerts' *Gutenberg Elegies*. If in turn you are the sort of serious reader who likes to have his or her views and ideas challenged then I in turn challenge you to read Sections 2 and 3 of the *Gutenberg Elegies*. If you are the well rounded reader, one of the Clerisy, however, you will of course read the entire book.

Richard Hopkins

The Bible as a Book

The Book. A History of the Bible. Christopher de Hamel. Phaidon Press Limited, London & New York, 2001. Square octavo, cloth over boards, jacket, 352 pp. Retail C\$59.95

AS de Hamel writes in his introduction, the title of this book could as easily be *The Bible. A History of the Book*: "[the] constant reshaping of the same text makes the Bible so fascinating as a book." Coming on the tails of a century that saw some of the most extravagant editions ever printed (the Arion and Pennyroyal editions are the most recent, but think back to the Doves and Bruce Rogers projects, the deluxe Gutenberg facsimiles, etc), this survey of the Bible's incarnations since the earliest existing manuscripts is an excellent primer on the broader topic of the book as object. The book's first half begins with Saint Jerome's translations in the fourth century AD and spans the Middle Ages, picture



The Book. A History of The Bible

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CHRISTOPHER
DE HAMEL

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and Wycliffite editions, and Gutenberg. The latter half covers the Bible's spread in lockstep with European exploration and printing technology. With only a slight change in emphasis, this book could be read as a history of book production for the past two thousand years.

The production is excellent, as far as trade publication standards go. Colour reproductions are clear and plentiful. While establishing a look distinct from its subject matter is the wise course, Ken Wilson's modern, asymmetric design underscores its own practical shortcomings: the type runs off the top and bottom of pages (when your thumb isn't covering the words up while holding the book open).

Currently Fellow Librarian of Corpus Christi Library, Cambridge, de Hamel had been responsible for all sales of medieval and illuminated manuscripts at Sotheby's for 25 years. His writing is clear and engaging, neither straying into the arid wasteland of academia (though he has the credentials) nor attempting to sensationalize what is – let's not kid ourselves – a topic only the afflicted can appreciate. A recommended addition to any collection of books on books.

Rollin Milroy