
Typographical Beginnings in Baltimore

lish languages. Isaiah Thomas is responsible both for the statement that he had in contemplation at the time of his death the printing of a German Bible and for the preservation of the following anecdote which he says was at one time current in Maryland. The story is that a Maryland missionary, while addressing a congregation of Indians, held out his Bible and proclaimed that it was "the gospel—the truth—the work of God." "What!" said one of his audience, "did the great all-powerful spirit *make this book?*" "Yes," replied the missionary, "it is His work." The literal-minded Indian answered indignantly, "I believe it to be a great lie! I go to Baltimore last month where I *see* Dutchman *make him*. Great Spirit want no Dutchmen to help him." Whether this anecdote meant that Hasselbach actually began the printing of a Bible, or whether the Indian in his scornful rejoinder had reference to books in general as an article of German manufacture, Mr. Thomas was unable to say, nor have later investigators been more fortunate in determining the facts.

The single recorded Baltimore imprint bearing the name of Nicholas Hasselbach is entitled, *A Detection of the Conduct and Proceedings of Messrs. Annan and Henderson . . . at Oxford, [Pa] Meeting-House, April 18 . . . 1764*. By John Redick.¹ It is the labored relation of a quarrel between certain members of the Presbyterian Church of Marshes Creek, near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the matter of which does not concern this narrative. Its title-page is without date, but the preface is dated from Tom's Creek, February 12, 1765. This little book of forty-seven pages is the earliest known example of printing done in Baltimore and the only certainly known specimen of Hasselbach's Baltimore press.

In the spring of 1768, while Hasselbach was still alive and presumably active in the printing business in Baltimore,² the inhabitants of that city and of the lower part of Baltimore County circulated a printed petition, addressed to the Governor and Assembly of Maryland, begging that the county seat be transferred from Joppa to Baltimore Town on the Patapsco. The petition was printed in three distinct forms³ and in two languages, English and German. These sheets are without imprint and there are three possibilities to be taken account of in a consideration of their origin: they may have been from the Green press of Annapolis, but they are dissimilar to the work of that press in the Roman types employed, and it is not known that

¹ See bibliographical appendix. Only known copy in the library of Robert Garrett, Esq., of Baltimore.

² See John Clapham's letter in the *Maryland Gazette* for September 22, 1768, and Bennet Allen's letter in the same place on September 29, 1768, in each of which are reprinted hand-bills issued by Allen in the summer of 1768 which, it is asserted in the letters, had been printed in Baltimore.

³ For full titles and descriptions of the three separate forms of this petition, see bibliographical appendix.