

dom. Many reformers fled to the free city of Geneva, Switzerland. The reformers wanted a translation corrected solely by the Hebrew and Greek and brought up to the new standards of scholarship. William Whittingham was responsible for the Geneva New Testament published in 1557, which was one of the first translations to divide the text into verses. In 1560, exiled reformers published the entire Bible. It quickly became the choice Bible in England, and more than 160 editions were published. It was nicknamed the “Breeches Bible,” from the rendering in Genesis 3:7: “They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves breeches.”

BISHOPS’ BIBLE, 1568 (Case 11)

In 1564, Archbishop Parker organized nine bishops into a revision committee. The ‘Bishops’ Bible’ was based on the Great Bible, and was not only large in size but costly in price. It was not suited for the general public and not satisfying to scholars. The Bishops’ Bible became the official Bible of the Church of England until 1611.

THE FIRST CATHOLIC BIBLES (Case 12)

The Rheims Bible and the Douay Bible are both Roman Catholic. The New Testament was published in 1568 by the English college located at Rheims. The Old Testament, a translation of the Latin Vulgate, was published in 1609 when the English college had returned to Douay. The King James revisers used the New Testament section of this Bible.

KING JAMES BIBLE, 1611 (Case 13)

King James I of England came to reign in 1603; he was a Protestant, but liberal toward the Catholics, and well-trained in languages and theology. During a conference in 1604, the Puritan clergymen expressed their concern with the errors found in their prayer books, which were based on the Great and Bishops’ Bibles. They requested the use of the Geneva Bible or a new translation. The King disliked the many marginal notes in the Geneva Bible, and he appointed a group of 54 Biblical scholars as translators. The King James translation was planned in 1604 and completed in 1611. It is known as the ‘authorized version’ although technically there is no record that Parliament or the King authorized it. The King James version has been the English-speaking world’s Bible for nearly four centuries. Even with the abundance of new versions, it remains popular today.

CHANGES IN THE KING JAMES BIBLE (Cases 13-14)

From 1611 to 1616, words, phrases and printing errors were corrected in the King James Bible. In 1629, Cambridge scholars performed a thorough and systematic revision of the text, italics and marginal references. In

1638, another carefully supervised edition was published by Cambridge. These two revisions made the King James Bible more consistent and correct. In 1701, the dates of Biblical events were added, and in 1724, laws were passed so those translating and printing the Bible would receive compensation for their work. Before the laws, these tasks were simply extra duties above preaching and teaching. Another major revision began in 1870 with a committee of 54 scholars; in May 1881 the revised New Testament was published, and in 1884 the revised Old Testament was completed.

After working on the revised version, American scholars needed a version that not only used American terms and spelling, but also reflected the textual position of the American scholars. On Aug. 26, 1901, Thomas Nelson and Sons, of New York City, released a version known as the American Standard version, and a revised American Standard was released in 1952. As recently as the early 1980s, the new King James version was introduced by Thomas Nelson, Inc., of Nashville, Tenn. It is the fifth major edition of the King James authorized Bible. Its’ purpose was to preserve the majestic, rhythmic flow of the King James Bible yet update it to today’s language. The same company, Thomas Nelson, Inc., has also released the 21st Century King James Bible.

Museum note: The last two cases are used for rotating exhibits. Please refer to the information in the display. Thank you.

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Welcome to the **Bible Museum**

With more than 6,000 rare Bibles in more than 600 languages and dialects, the Bible Museum provides a unique look into the world’s best-known and best-selling book ever. This brochure will guide you through some important museum displays, illustrating the perils and passion shared by Bible scholars from the ancient world through today.

THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

Pictograms, such as the displayed examples from Luristan, are the earliest type of writing, and were created by drawing an object on stone or clay. These cylinders were used as signature seals, an early form of identification, and were common throughout the ancient world of 1800 B.C. Another early form of writing, cuneiform, (meaning wedge-shaped), was made by pressing a sharp reed or stone into set clay. Cuneiform was used extensively by the Mesopotamians and Phoenicians, and eventually was developed into our modern-day alphabet.

Almost four thousand years ago, scribes in the ancient Sumerian city of Nippur, approximately 100 miles southeast of modern Baghdad, wrote the story of the flood on a clay tablet. The clay tablet exhibited here is a facsimile from the Biblical Archaeology Society, and is the earliest, but not the only, flood story that closely resembles the account found in Genesis. Archaeologists continue to discover evidence that supports the Bible’s authenticity.

EARLY BIBLE HISTORY

The first scripture that was written down was the tablets of stone written by God on Mount Sinai. Moses was chosen by God to write the Pentateuch, or the Books of the Law, which were kept by the priests with the Ark of the Covenant. Other writings were added, and King David wrote and collected the songs and poems used for worship in the temple. In the fifth century B.C., Nehemiah brought together the books of kings and prophets and created a library. With time and neglect, the records were lost. Once again, the information was gathered and divided into three groups: the law, the words of the prophets and the rest of the books, and by Jesus’ time, these books were well-known and accepted as the Word

of God. In 90 A.D., the Old Testament books were formally accepted into the canon.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS (Case 2)

The most important Biblical archeological discovery of the 20th Century was the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls were found by Bedouin shepherds, and their contents verified much of our modern-day Bible. The scrolls were made from animal skins and reeds.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS (Case 3)

During the time of Christ, Greek was the most important language in the world. Although the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, the books of the New Testament are thought to have been written in Greek. However, some scholars believe that the New Testament was written in Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus. A modern form of Aramaic, called Syriac, is still spoken in Iraq.

An unknown follower of Paul assembled the Pauline Epistles into Corpus Paulinum during the first century at Ephesus. Many believe this follower was actually Onesimus, the slave who became the Bishop of Ephesus. In the early second century the four Gospels were collected into one volume, and the Epistles became one volume. The New Testament as we know it was formally accepted in the late fourth century. During this period, the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus, containing the Old and New Testaments, were collected in one huge volume. Special features began to appear as well, such as cross-references, chronology, book titles, lectionaries with passages ‘appointed to be read,’ and other significant study aids.

LATIN TRANSLATIONS (Case 4)

In 420 A.D., St. Jerome made the first full translation of the Bible in the Latin Vulgate language. The early church replaced Greek with Latin during the fifth century. The first English translation of any book of the Bible was the Psalter of Aldhelm in the seventh century. In the eighth century, Bishop Egbert translated the first English version of the Gospels. During this time, the Bible was in the hands of church leaders only, and not read by the common people, so art and drama became important to presenting the gospel.

JOHN WYCLIFFE, 1382 (Case 5)

John Wycliffe was a 14th century Bible translator and Oxford theological scholar who believed that the Scriptures should be available for everyone to read. He began translating the Bible from Latin to English, completing the task in 1382. Each copy took ten months to produce, making it too expensive to commonly distribute. Instead, Wycliffe established a group of itinerant preachers, the Lollards, who set out with the handwritten copies to spread the Word of God to the people in their own language. He died on Dec. 31, 1384, two days after suffering a stroke. His impact was such that 44 years after his death, his remains and writings were

burned, and the ashes thrown into the Swift River. These measures were too late, however; the idea that the gospel should be read by all had already taken hold and would eventually travel around the world.

JOHANNES GUTENBERG, 1454 (Case 6)

Gutenberg took the invention of the printing press a step further by inventing moveable type in 1454. The first book off the Gutenberg press was the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible in 1455. With Gutenberg’s invention, thousands of copies could be produced quickly and distributed at an affordable price for people of all classes. This invention had a tremendous impact on history and the worldwide availability of not only the Bible, but books in general.

MARTIN LUTHER, 1522 (Case 7)

When Martin Luther was a young monk in 14th century Germany, he read Paul’s writing in Romans 1:17: “The Gospel reveals how God puts people right with himself. It is through faith from beginning to end.” He felt a great release and freedom, which he described thusly: “I felt completely reborn...my love for that sweetest word ‘righteousness of God’ was henceforth as great as my hatred for it had been hitherto. In this way this passage of Paul was truly the gate of Paradise.” While lecturing at the University at Wittenberg, Luther proclaimed this message and diligently studied the Hebrew Old Testament and Erasmus’ Greek New Testament. He then set out to make a new German translation which would be clear and understandable. He completed the New Testament in 1522, and the Old Testament in 1532. His translation remains the best-known German Bible, and the hymns he wrote are still sung in churches today.

ERASMUS, 1522 (Case 9)

Erasmus, encouraged by Pope Leo X, published the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516. Later editions of the work contained his Latin translation. His clear, accurate translations let people read for themselves the original meanings of the text, and created a demand for a similar version in English.

WILLIAM TYNDALE, 1525 (Case 9)

William Tyndale began his education at Oxford, and continued it at Cambridge under Erasmus. Tyndale was determined to make a new translation from the original Greek instead of the Latin as Wycliffe had done. Tyndale went first to Germany then to Wittenberg, where he visited Martin Luther, who had posted his 95 theses on the Wittenberg church door only seven years earlier. While there, he worked on his translation of the New Testament, which was completed in 1525. Since King Henry opposed the circulation of Tyndale’s translation, it was smuggled to England’s shores concealed in cases of merchandise. In 1535, while living in Belgium, Tyndale was discovered by his enemies. He was imprisoned, convicted of heresy, then put to death

by strangling and his body burned on Oct. 6, 1536. His last words were, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.” Before his death, an edition of the complete Bible was in circulation with the King’s permission. Tyndale’s dying prayer was being answered.

MYLES COVERDALE, 1535 (Case 10)

While at Cambridge, Myles Coverdale developed a consuming passion to study the Scriptures and become a priest. Cromwell, King Henry’s Secretary of State, contacted his old friend and asked him to prepare a new translation. Coverdale did not possess the scholarship of Tyndale, but he was a careful editor and compiler, able to use the materials on hand to produce a Bible to satisfy both the people and the religious leaders of the day. The Coverdale Bible emerged in 1535, and a revised edition published in 1537 received an authorization “with the King’s most gracious license.” The Coverdale Bible holds the distinction of being the first complete Bible printed in the English language.

THOMAS MATTHEW, 1537

Thomas Matthew was probably a pen name used by John Rogers, a close friend and associate of Tyndale. He believed that any translation associated with Tyndale or his associates would be rejected. Tyndale had made Rogers his literary executor and left him his unfinished Old Testament manuscript. Rogers merged Tyndale’s translation with Coverdale’s work, then realized that Tyndale’s work was superior to the secondary sources used by Coverdale. The Bishop of England was presented a copy of Matthew’s Bible in 1537, and then gave it to Cromwell who submitted it to the King for licensing approval. Within ten days the King authorized the sale and reading of Matthew’s Bible. John Rogers later became the first victim of martyrdom during the reign of “Bloody Mary” in 1555.

GREAT BIBLE, 1539

The clergy had a strong dislike for the many notes that accompanied Matthew’s Bible. Cromwell asked Coverdale to prepare another translation that would be true to the original text, but non-offensive to the clergy. The result was the Great Bible (named for its excessive size), accepted by King Henry VIII. Cromwell also issued a royal proclamation commanding that the Great Bible be read publicly in every church across the land. Copies of the Bible were chained in the church, and it picked up the name the “Chain Bible.”

GENEVA BIBLE, 1560 (Case 11)

In the later years of King Henry’s reign, he banned every Bible except the Great Bible, and reading was confined to the upper classes. In 1553 “Bloody Mary” came to the throne, bringing to the land a reign of terror and martyr-