

# *The Story of the Bible:*

## *Word of God, Hand of Man*

A Special Collection of Biblical Texts and Manuscripts  
Presented by the Clayton Museum of Ancient History  
York College

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### **Introduction**

For billions of people, it represents light and salt. It is a best seller; the words of the Creator writ large. The foundations of western civilization rest on its concepts of law, politics, history, literature, poetry. Its stories are filled with names known almost universally—Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah, Jesus. Children recite its simple verses, and old men live by its precepts. The wisdom found in its pages transcends the human capacity to fathom completely.

The Bible remains a literary work for all time, an extraordinarily unique compendium of books and letters, written without seeming deadline over a period of 1,500 years. Its authorship may be counted as one, but its penmen number in the dozens. They are themselves the epitome of diversity, ranging from kings to chroniclers, prophets to priests, physicians to poets, trailblazers to tax collectors. No book in history rivals the story of the Bible. Despite the abundance of literary sources that comprise this great book, the Bible is built around a close-knit compendium of themes—that God has always been, that His hand has affected the course of history, that He has always had a plan for mankind, and that He has provided a path of reconciliation between Himself and a lost world.

### **Mission of This Special Collection**

Our mission in creating this special collection at the Clayton Museum of Ancient History is to open to the public a small window revealing the processes by which the Bible was not only written, but transmitted from the ancient world into our own time. It has been a complicated, convoluted, and controversial process. If the Bible was written in various languages by approximately forty individuals representing a variety of cultures over a millennium and a half, history has required an endless number of others to collect, copy, and preserve its Scriptural integrity. Untold numbers of scribes, copyists, monks,

churchmen, manuscript hunters, scholars, and preservationists have each played their own part in keeping the Bible intact and available for future generations. This museum display is designed to create a visual of how the Bible survived over the centuries so it could continue to provide its readers their own glimpse into the mind and message of God.

### **Sources for the Old Testament**

From the modern perspective, why are ancient, or early manuscripts important to the history of the Bible? In a world in which Bibles are plentiful, counting into the hundreds of millions, why worry about dusty old manuscripts? The answers to such questions are important to consider. The Bibles that are so plentiful today did not spring up from nowhere. They have a past, a documentary, human past that was required to transmit the word of God all the way into the twenty-first century. Consider the following: Among the facsimile documents presented in this special collection are copies of the famed Dead Sea Scrolls. The role of these documents is crucial to the manuscript history of the Old Testament. Before their discovery in a Palestinian cave in the 1940s, the earliest manuscripts unearthed to date of any of the books of the Old Testament were not even written in Hebrew, but rather in Greek, as found in the Greek Septuagint.

Originally, of course, the books of the Old Testament were hand-written in Hebrew by a host of authors, including unknown, unnamed scribes. For centuries, the Old Testament remained largely a book for one people, so Hebrew remained the language of the book. Over time, however, the Jewish people were influenced by other ethnic groups, including their Ancient Near Eastern neighbors, such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Persians and, ultimately, the Latin-speaking Romans. By the early third century B.C., knowledge of how to read and, importantly, write Hebrew was becoming less common, which fostered the necessity for translating ancient Hebrew texts into other languages, predominantly Greek and Aramaic. The oldest and most crucial of those translations of the Old Testament was penned in the third century B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt.

According to accepted legend, the writing of the Septuagint was ordered by the Egyptian King Ptolemy II (the Ptolemy family was of Greek extraction, taking the throne following the conquests of Alexander the Great) who ordered seventy-two Jewish scholars brought to Alexandria from Jerusalem to translate the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. Although the legend suggests that the scholars completed their translations in seventy-two days, the work more likely spanned a much longer period of time. The Septuagint soon took its place as a key translation of the Old Testament. It remained the translated authority for the next two thousand years, the starting point for translating the Old Testament into additional languages. It was the Old Testament source for the early Church, to the point that, if a New Testament writer quoted the Old Testament, he was likely using the Septuagint. Even today, the Septuagint remains the go-to Old Testament text for the Greek Orthodox Church.

Other reasons explain the shortage of early Hebrew manuscripts of Old Testament books. Only a handful of such manuscripts survived the destruction of Jerusalem (and the

Temple) at the hands of a Roman army led by General Titus (son of the Emperor Vespasian) in A.D. 70. Desperate to preserve their Holy Scriptures, Jewish leaders, including scholars and rabbis, established a Jewish school in Jamnia, a small town near the Mediterranean coast south of Joppa. Here, the scholars determined what Jewish writings comprised Scripture and even worked up a system to make certain that copies of Hebrew writings were transmitted as accurately as possible. They decided that any old manuscripts that were worn, tattered, partial, or badly damaged would be either buried or destroyed. For this reason, there are only a scant number of Hebrew manuscripts that date prior to A.D. 850. One extraordinary exception to that rule is the collection of fragmentary manuscripts discovered in 1947—the Dead Sea Scrolls.

### Originals and Copies

The manuscript history of the Bible, of both the Old and the New Testaments, is incomparably better than that of any other ancient book. True, no original manuscript of any writing of the Bible still exists (scholars call them "the original autographs"). The autographs are long gone; all that survive are copies, or copies of copies. Such is the case with virtually all ancient writings. For example, the original manuscripts penned by the Apostle Paul (or his amanuensis) are long gone. The same is true for the actual manuscript written by Matthew or Mark or any of the other New Testament writers. But the gap of time between the original writings of the Bible and the copies that do survive is very short in comparison to the gap of time, say, between the original writing of the Greek and Roman classics, and the copies of them that survive--and the sheer quantity of manuscript copies of the Bible is exponentially greater. No ancient book has anywhere near the quality or the quantity of manuscript evidence that the Bible does.

The manuscript history of Scripture is a biblical miracle in its own right, an extensive documentary trail of bread crumbs that is unique in the ancient world. While the original letters are gone and dust, today, we have between 5,000 and 6,000 partial or complete ancient biblical manuscripts that fall into a handful of categories.<sup>1</sup> These include about 125 *papyri*, many with early dates from the third and fourth centuries A.D.; approximately 300 *uncials*, fragments and whole manuscripts hand-copied in the Roman style (all capital letters) and dating before the time of the Frankish Emperor Charlemagne (prior to A.D. 800); 2,000 *lectionary* manuscripts, excerpts of Scriptures intended to be read on church holy days; and 2,600 *minuscules*, manuscripts of later origin written in a small, cursive style of Greek. Just the uncials alone represent hundreds of early sources for Scripture, with the gap in time between a given original manuscript and the uncial itself typically only stretching over a few hundred years. In fact, some of the oldest surviving New

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to these, there are also approximately 8,000 manuscripts written in the later Latin Vulgate. The **Vulgate** is a late-fourth-century A.D. Latin translation of the Bible that was to become the Catholic Church's officially promoted Latin version of Scripture during the sixteenth century and is still used fundamentally in the Latin Church to this day.

Testament manuscripts and fragments date to within seventy to 170 years from their original writing.

To the average person, this may still seem like an extremely long time gap, but, by ancient standards, it is anything but. Making similar time comparisons with ancient Greek or Roman texts reveals a striking difference. Today, for example, experts believe they have relatively complete copies of seven plays (including *Ajax*, *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex*) penned by the fifth century B.C. Greek playwright Sophocles. But the earliest, substantial Sophoclean manuscript dates to 1,400 years later! For other contemporary Greek writers, such as playwrights Aeschylus and Aristophanes, or the historian Thucydides, the time gap is the same. For playwright Euripides [480-406 B.C.], the gap is 1,600 years. For Plato, it's 1,300 years from his time to the earliest manuscripts under his name; for Demosthenes, it drops to 1,200 years. The ancient writer with the shortest gap between his life and his earliest extant manuscripts is the Roman author Virgil [70-19 B.C.] at an atypical 350 years. Not only do we have source manuscripts for Scriptures of early origin, as already stated, we have thousands of them. For many ancient, non-biblical writers, the source manuscripts available today sometimes number in the dozens at best. Even for important Roman writers such as Virgil or Ovid, who lived during the time of Jesus's earthly ministry, source manuscripts only number a few hundred.

All this means that, when compared to all other ancient manuscripts, both in age and numerical availability, the Bible, especially the New Testament, stands as a unique document, a work penned by dozens of writers over a significant length of time across multiple cultures and languages, yet delivered to the modern reader with a documentary track record that is difficult to doubt. The thread of Biblical history is of many strands and hard to break. Given the historical and religious significance of the Bible over thousands of years, it seems clear that there are so many manuscripts because this book is not like any other in the world.

## Original Languages

While today the Bible is translated into thousands of languages, with English as one of the most predominant, the original books of the Holy Scriptures relied on a number of languages that could be counted on one hand. Essentially, the Bible was written in three original languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The lion's share of the Old Testament was penned in Hebrew, with a handful of portions written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek.

Both Hebrew and Aramaic are Semitic languages.<sup>2</sup> Hebrew is a language consisting of a 22-consonant alphabet (with no vowels) and written from right to left. The oldest example of the Hebrew language is found on the Gezer Calendar, a limestone tablet carved around 1,000 B.C. Perhaps ironically, the most important early source for written, classical Hebrew is the Bible itself. This means that some ancient Hebrew words are only found in the Old Testament and may not exist in any other ancient documents. This

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<sup>2</sup> The word *Semitic* is taken from the name of Noah's first son, Shem. Arabic and Amharic are two additional important Semitic languages. Amharic is spoken today in Egypt.

reinforces the importance of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. Some of those manuscripts and fragments found in those cave jars date back two thousand years, and even though some of those more recently penned were written in Aramaic and Greek, the majority represent early sources of ancient Hebrew.

Aramaic may best represent a Biblical language that provides historical linkage between ancient Hebrew manuscripts and later Greek manuscripts. Aramaic in the Ancient Near East was a common language, one recognized by empires, including the Assyrian, the Babylonian, and the Persian. Since all three of these empires conquered Israel and the Hebrew people in their own time, many Israelites eventually relied on Aramaic as their everyday language, even as Hebrew fell into disuse. Not all of the Old Testament came to us through Aramaic, but such books as *Daniel* and *Ezra* did.<sup>3</sup> It was still the dominant language of the Jews during the life of Jesus. In the Gospels, we read such words as *Abba*, *Maranatha*, and *Cephas*, which are all of Aramaic origin. Jesus' is speaking Aramaic on the cross when He quotes from Psalm 22: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.*"

Perhaps no other language has had a more dramatic impact on the history of western civilization—and on the linguistic complexities of the New Testament—than Greek.<sup>4</sup> It is the oldest European language (it is usually referred to as an Indo-European language, a horn of linguistic plenty, including hundreds of European language stocks from Celtic to Germanic to Slavic), one originally spoken on the island of Crete as early as 1400 B.C. One of its early dialects was Attic, the version of Greek spoken in fifth-century Athens during its golden era. The future of Greek was cemented by the conquests of Alexander the Great [356-323 B.C.] whose phalanx-centered conquests spread Greek influence from Egypt to India and nailed down a far-flung Hellenistic<sup>5</sup> culture that lingered on until Rome began its campaigns of imperial expansion.

But this expansive Greek world relied on a new type of language, a common Greek dialect called *Koine*. This became a *lingua franca*, a common language (this was also true of Aramaic in an earlier time), one that bound variant peoples together, especially through commerce and trade, so that a Persian shipping agent could speak with an Egyptian trader of wine, for example. Even after the Romans came to dominant the Ancient Near East and spread the influence of Latin (it was the official language of the Empire) Greek remained common, a continuing Hellenistic influence, in part because it

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<sup>3</sup> Aramaic was the language spoken in the court of such Babylonian emperors as Nebuchadnezzar, whose reign features prominently in the Old Testament book of *Daniel*.

<sup>4</sup> Today, we refer to those ancients who lived in modern-day Greece and the Aegean region as Greeks, but they did not refer to themselves by that term. They called themselves Hellenes, thus historians often use the term "Hellenic" Greece or the Greece of the ancient era.

<sup>5</sup> It is easy to confuse the words *Hellenic* and *Hellenistic*. **Hellenic** (Greek) refers to the people who lived in classical Greece before Alexander the Great's death, while **Hellenistic** (Greek-like) refers to Greeks and others who lived during the period after Alexander's conquests.

had been so prevalent for so many centuries and due to the fact that was easy to learn to read and write.<sup>6</sup>

The use of Greek as the language of the New Testament likely had several advantages to the writers of these Scriptures. Greek offered a rich vocabulary, with linguistic nuances that provided words thinly-sliced in meaning. It was also a language that was highly adaptable, with the capacity to create words nearly out of whole cloth, by compounding existing words into new. (For example, the Greek word “philosophy” was a compound of *philo*, meaning “loving,” and “sophia,” meaning “wisdom,” thus “love of wisdom.”) Ultimately, Greek provided a fully-formed foundation for writing the New Testament, for communicating the Gospels, the travelogues of Paul, the apocalyptic scenes of the Book of Revelation, as well as the complex sentencing and heavy theology of the Pauline letters.

### **Biblical Materials**

Today, for most readers of the Bible, it is formatted like any other book, as bound pages with hard or soft covers, all sewn (or glued) into one easily portable and instantly accessible volume. But early works of the Scriptures were more difficult to create and even more complicated to read. You can see the differences in scrolls and modern book styles in this museum display.

It is the word itself—*bible*—that begins to define even what we mean when we use the word “book.” The word *bible* comes from the Greek word *biblos*, as well as the Latin word *biblia*, both of which simply mean “book.”<sup>7</sup> But the early “book” forms in the ancient world, as well as the materials used, were different from those we commonly use today. One early material was papyrus (we get our word “paper” from this word), a tall, pulpy reed plant that thrived along the ancient banks of Egypt’s Nile River. (You may recall that the baby Moses was placed in a basket made from this material. The English translation of “bulrushes” is really the papyrus plant.) The Egyptians created papyrus as a writing material, through a process they guarded carefully. It involved cutting papyrus stalks into lengthy strips, soaking them in water, then laying them in a two-layer basket weave of right angles. The wet strips were pressed together and dried to allow the strips to meld into one piece. The resulting material was polished with a stone or shell to a relatively smooth surface, one that would certainly absorb the natural inks and colors of the day. Because it was a material made of long strips of organic matter, it naturally led to the development of “books” that were long, scrolls of strips wrapped around a pair of rods or sticks. Papyrus scrolls were a common form of writing material for thousands of years.

As Bible translations came along in later centuries, the words *scroll* and *book* were sometimes used as the same word. In II Timothy 4:13, the New International Version

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<sup>6</sup> Both the Greek and the Hebrew alphabets find their origins in the Phoenician alphabet, the earliest documented alphabet of the ancient world. The Greeks added vowels and the language includes both lowercase letters and capitals, just as English does, and both are written from left to right, unlike Hebrew.

<sup>7</sup> In the Ancient Near East, specifically in modern-day Lebanon, the Canaanite people known as the Phoenicians—they created an early alphabet form—lived in cities that included Byblos, which was a center of papyrus production. This reed material was pounded into scrolls for books. Byblos became the source for the Greek word for “book,” and, thus, the word *bible*.

(NIV) has Paul requesting Timothy to bring to him “*scrolls, especially the parchments.*” In the New King James Version (NKJV), he asks his young friend to bring “the *books, especially the parchments.*”

It is that word “parchment,” that leads us to another form of writing material in the ancient world. Parchment was also a product of Egypt, but it did not become that popular until the second century B.C. Due to confrontational geopolitics, King Ptolemy of Egypt cut off exports of papyrus to the king of Pergamum (a Greek city-state located in modern-day Turkey and one of the Seven Churches of Asia found in the Book of Revelation). Seeking a replacement for papyrus, craftsmen in Pergamum began experimenting with creating writing material from animal hides. They would stretch out a hide, scraping it to make it cleaner and smoother into thin pieces of material. Although a messy process, they soon realized they were on to something, for their parchment was easier to produce and more durable. In time, papyrus was passe, and parchment the new paper. Such material was usually derived from goat or sheep. A finer form was *vellum*, which was made from calf skin, and was more durable and lasting.

With this new material, the people of Pergamum also invented a new form of manuscript. Scrolls had always been cumbersome. They sometimes extended on for tens of yards in length, and it was difficult to locate a specific place in the manuscript without rolling it off of one spool and onto another. (Think of how you “scroll” documents on your smart phone today. You can only see one part of the document at a time, right?) The new form of “book” became known as a *codex*, which featured writing on both sides of the “pages”, which were folded and bound together with a spine, just as books are typically created today. As long as you know where to look, you can instantly find any place reference in such a manuscript. Technically, today’s bound books are *codices*, but the word is not used that way. It has become a reference word for non-scroll, handwritten manuscripts created prior to the invention of modern printing. In the museum display, you will see such manuscripts as the Codex Sinaiticus. This refers to a document that is in modern book form, not a scroll. For some reason, the codex form was in common use with Christian writers earlier than with those scribes who produced non-Christian documents.

### **The Manuscripts on Display**

As you walk through this special collection of manuscripts, it is important to know what you are looking at. Just like the Bible itself, this display is centered on copies, not originals. (One exception is the single leaf (or page) from an original 1611 King James Bible. That is an original, 400-year-old leaf.) You will see the word “facsimile” used repeatedly in this display. That word means that the page or manuscript represents the original in every way except that it is a copy. The King James Bible you see displayed is a facsimile. It is not an original, but it is the exact size and dimension of the original. The text you see is exactly as it appears in an original 1611 copy of the KJV. If you were to visit the Library of Congress today, you will see an original Gutenberg Bible. Here in the Clayton, you will see a facsimile that looks identical to that original. The various pages

displayed on the walls around the gallery are just as the originals look today, including the shading and color.

The following is provided to help identify the materials on display in this special collection:

### **Torah Scroll**

A *sefer Torah* is a scroll containing the first five books of the Old Testament. Scrolls were common in the ancient world, but were gradually replaced by the *codex*—or book form—beginning in the first century A.D. There are 304,805 letters in a Torah scroll. This scroll is about fifty feet in length.

Seufferlein Collection—2019.001.039

### **The Genesis Scroll** (*top, right*)

Reproduction. Some 20 fragments of different copies of the book of Genesis were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls. This particular fragment, 4Q4 (Plate 1071), from Cave 4, was written with black ink on a thin layer of reddish-brown parchment. The scroll contains only 11 lines of text (Genesis 1:18-27). It begins with the conclusion of the fourth day of creation (the separation of light and darkness) and ends with the creation of man on the sixth day. Of particular interest is a scribal correction on the fifth line. The scribe had mistakenly forgotten the letter vav ( w ) but corrected his mistake by post-inserting it above the tav ( t ). The original size of the fragment is 11 X 11 cm and dates to the middle of the 1st century BCE.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.007

### **The Psalms Scrolls – Songs of Ascent** (*second, right*)

Reproduction. The book of Psalms contains fifteen Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134). Pilgrims would recite these Psalms while making their way “up” to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals: Passover, Weeks (Pentecost), and Tabernacles. Scholars also maintain that they were sung by the temple priests while ascending the steps that lead up to the temple. The four leaves reproduced here contain portions of eleven of the fifteen Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134). They date to the first half of the 1st century AD. Reading from right to left: Fragment # 1 has portions of Psalm 105:25-45 (column 1, right) and 148:1-12 (column 2, left); Fragment # 2 comprises Psalm 121:1-123:2; Fragment # 3 contains Psalm 124:7-127:1; and Fragment # 4 has portions of Psalm 128:4-130:8 and Psalm 132:8-133:1. These fragments were discovered in 1956 in Cave 11. Six different Psalms manuscripts were uncovered in Cave 11.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.004

### **The Ten Commandments Scroll** (*third, right*)

Reproduction. Approximately thirty portions of copies of the book of Deuteronomy were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls. This particular scroll, 4Q41 (Plate 981), is unique in that it might have been used as a liturgical document. More importantly, however, the scroll preserves the entire Decalogue (Ten Commandments) almost in the form that has

been handed down to us this day. The scroll begins with Deuteronomy 5:1 (first column, beginning from right) and ends with verse 33 (fourth column, on the far left). The Ten Commandments begin on the first column, line 12, and end on the third column, line 12. The scroll dates to the latter half of the 1st century AD.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.005

### **The Leviticus Scroll** (*bottom, right*)

Reproduction. The Leviticus Scroll was found in Cave 11 by a Bedouin in 1956. The scroll includes portions of Leviticus 22-27 and dates from the late second century to the early first century BC. The scroll was written in paleo-Hebrew, which is a form of ancient Hebrew script. The original scroll was made from goat skin with the text inscribed on the grain side of the skin. The writing pattern of the text most likely indicates that it was written by a single experienced scribe. The presented reproduction of the fragment reflects the lower portion of the final six columns of the original manuscript. Reference: Freedman, D. N. and K. A. Mathews. *The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll*. Winona Lake, Indiana, 1985.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.006

[All Dead Sea Scroll fragments produced by Biblical Reproductions – Authorized Reproductions from the Holy Land by the Israel Antiquities Authority]

### **Dead Sea Scroll Storage Jar**

Replica. Several of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in storage jars hidden in the caves above the Qumran community. These jars were likely made in the Qumran community, which was also responsible for at least some of the scrolls.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.012

### **Dead Sea Scroll Ceramic and Coins**

Replicas. Many ceramic bowls, plates, and goblets were found in one room in the Qumran community with many being stacked on each other. Archaeologists determined that this room likely served as a storage room. It was next to a large meeting room, possibly the dining room. Many coins were found in the different rooms. Prospective members had to give up all their earthly possessions in order to be a member of the community. Coins such as these likely belonged to prospective members.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.013-2019.001.038

### **Chester Beatty Papyri (A.D. 200s)**

Facsimile. Original at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland.

The Chester Beatty Papyri includes the oldest substantial portions of the New Testament, written a century earlier than Codex Vaticanus or Codex Sinaiticus. In 1930 and 1931 Chester Beatty, an American collector who had made a fortune in copper mining, purchased portions of eleven codices from an antiquities dealer in Egypt, a collection of eleven handwritten books that would be named for him. The University of Michigan purchased other portions of the same codices about the same time. Seven of the Chester

Beatty codices contain portions of the Old Testament, three contain portions of the New Testament, and one of the Book of Enoch and a Christian homily. The first of the three New Testament codices originally had 110 leaves and contained the four gospels and Acts. The second codex (called P46) is the best preserved, containing 104 leaves featuring the letters of Paul and written between A.D. 175 and 225—approximately 150 years after Paul wrote the letters. This two-page spread is from P46 and contains Ephesians 6:8 through Galatians 1:8. In this codex, Ephesians came before Galatians unlike Bibles today.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.043

**P-1 Fragment of the Gospel of Matthew (A.D. 200s) (top, left)**

Reproduction. Original at the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

P-1 is a papyrus manuscript containing portions of the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: 1:1-9, 12, 14-20. Discovered by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt in an ancient garbage dump in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt in the 1890's.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.010

**P-52 Fragment of the Gospel of John (A.D. 100s) (bottom, left)**

Reproduction. Original at John Rylands University Library, Manchester University, United Kingdom.

This tiny scrap of papyrus is the oldest existing manuscript fragment of the New Testament ever found, dated to only a few decades after the death of the Apostle John. Measuring 3.5 by 2.4 inches, one side contains the words from John 18:31-33, and the other side contains parts of verses 37 and 38. As the tiny fragment contains handwriting on both sides, it suggests that it came from a codex rather than a scroll. A codex was made from sheets of parchment or papyrus that were sewn together and folded in a format resembling a book. P-52 was recovered in the early 20th century among garbage heaps close to the Nile River Valley along with other papyrus fragments by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, scholars at the University of Oxford.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.011

**P-66 Gospel of John (A.D. 200s)**

Reproduction. Original at the Bodmer Library, Cologny, Switzerland.

Papyrus 66 (P-66) is a manuscript that dates from about 200 AD and is part of a collection known as the Bodmer Papyri. One hundred-and-four pages remain, containing the text of John 1:1-6:11 and 6:35b - 14:15. It was discovered in 1952 at Jabal Abu Mana near Dishna (Egypt). It is one of the best preserved manuscripts and one of the most important copies of the Gospel of John in existence. (From Bruce Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*. Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, 2005.)

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.009

### **Aleppo Codex**

Facsimile. Original at the Shrine of the Book, Jerusalem, Israel.

A page from the Aleppo Codex recreated on vellum paper (not animal skin). The codex was written in the 10th century AD and endorsed for its accuracy by Moses Maimonides. It is considered the best and oldest text of the Hebrew Bible.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.008

### **Codex Vaticanus (A.D. 350)**

Facsimile. Original at the Vatican Library.

The oldest, nearly complete copy of the Bible is Codex Vaticanus, which was produced during the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. About that time, the Roman Emperor Constantine instructed his chief court historian, Eusebius, to order “fifty copies of the sacred Scriptures.” Vaticanus appeared in the first catalog of the Vatican Library in 1475, but nothing is known of its history prior to that date. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, most scholars did not have much interest in studying it. This page contains the end of II Thessalonians and the beginning of Hebrews. Colored head bands (the green bar with the three red crosses on this page) and initial letters at the beginning of books of the Bible were added probably in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Corrections have been made throughout the life of the codex, including on this page. One 13<sup>th</sup> Century scribe, dissatisfied with the word selection of a previous scribe, wrote (you can see this to the left of the middle column): “Fool and knave, can’t you leave the old reading alone and not alter it!”

McNeese Collection—2019.001.050

### **Codex Sinaiticus (A.D. 300s)**

Facsimile. Original at various locations.

Codex Sinaiticus is one of the oldest surviving copies of the Christian Bible. Written in Greek, it contains the entire Old and New Testaments. It was discovered by Constantin von Tischendorf in the mid-19th century at St. Catherine’s Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula. Today portions of the codex are divided between St. Catherine’s Monastery, the British Library, Leipzig University Library, and the National Library of Russia.

Trout Collection—2019.001.003

### **Saint Catherine’s Monastery (*photos, left*)**

Saint Catherine’s Monastery contains the world’s oldest continually operating library which included the Codex Sinaiticus until 1859. Located at the foot of Mount Sinai, it was built between 548 and 565. The Bell Tower, pictured to the left, was added in 1871. The monastery is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is controlled by the autonomous Church of Sinai, part of the wider Greek Orthodox Church.

### **Codex Amiatinus (Before A.D. 716) (*TOP, left*)**

Facsimile. Original at Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Italy.

The earliest complete Latin Vulgate Bible, Codex Amiatinus, is a large volume measuring more than 19 by 13 inches. It is seven inches thick and weighs 75 pounds. In the early 8<sup>th</sup> Century, monks at the twin-foundation monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow in northern

England made three massive Bibles, including one for Pope Gregory II. The monastery secured a grant of additional land to raise the 2,000 head of cattle needed to produce the vellum. Ceolfrid, the monastery's abbot, set out to deliver the pope's copy, but he died along the way, and it was not known whether the pope's copy ever made it to the Vatican. For nearly 1,000 years, however, it was in the remote Benedictine Abbey of San Salvatore on Monte Amiata in southern Tuscany. The monastery closed in the 1780s, and its library and art were taken to Florence, where Codex Amiatinus has remained for more than 200 years in the Laurentian Library. It was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century that the manuscript's English origin was realized. The page shown here is the first page of Genesis. The red portion reads: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Codex Amiatinus is written in uncial characters (capital letters), but without punctuation. McNeese Collection—2019.001.048

**Peshitta Syriac (A.D. 460s) (BOTTOM, left)**

Facsimile. In 463-64, John, a deacon in Amid in what is now eastern Turkey, copied the first five books of the Old Testament in Syriac and signed and dated his manuscript. This important manuscript is the oldest known copy of a part of the Bible that was dated by its scribe. Peshitta is "Syriac for "simple version," much as the name "Vulgate" for Jerome's Latin translation means "the language of the people." The Peshitta Old Testament is important to scholars because it was translated from Hebrew into Syriac, whereas most early Old Testament translations were made from the Greek Septuagint. The Peshitta became the official translation used by Syriac-speaking churches in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century. This page contains Genesis 29:25-30:2, the story of Laban tricking Jacob into marrying Leah instead of her sister Rachel.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.041

**Lindisfarne Gospel Facsimile Late 7<sup>th</sup> or Early 8<sup>th</sup> Century (right)**

Facsimile. Original at the British Library, London, United Kingdom.

The Lindisfarne Gospels is one of the most beautifully crafted manuscripts produced during the Dark Ages, and the manuscript is remarkably well preserved. While most medieval manuscripts were produced by teams of scribes and illustrators, this one was written and decorated by a single artist, Eadfrith, at a Benedictine monastery on the small island of Lindisfarne off the eastern coast of Northern England. The text is the Latin Vulgate, but about 200 years after the gospel book was created, a priest named Aldred inserted between the lines of Latin an Old English translation of the gospels, which is today the earliest known English translation of any portion of the Bible. Each of the four gospels begins with a portrait of the Evangelist, followed by a carpet page—a full page of intricate geometrical design—and then an initial page of text with elaborate decoration. The page shown here is the opening of the gospel of Matthew with the words, in Latin, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the Son of Abraham."

McNeese Collection—2019.001.053

**Book of Kells (A.D. 800) (above)**

Facsimile. Original at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland.

The Book of Kells is considered to be Ireland's finest national treasure and is one of the most spectacular medieval illuminated manuscripts. Containing the four gospels in Latin, the Book of Kells was probably begun in a monastery off the western coast of Scotland. Viking raids caused the monks to flee to Ireland's Abbey at Kells where they completed the book. It was stolen for two months in 1006. In time, it was presented to the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, where today half a million people a year go to see it. The decorations are highly complex and so intricate that they can be best seen only with a magnifying glass, which was not available when the book was created.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.046

**Medieval Illuminated Page, featuring gold leaf. (A.D. 1133) (top, left)**

Facsimile. Original at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

On this page, the Apostle John, the writer of the Gospel bearing his name, holds a codex of the Scriptures. The work is from a Greek New Testament completed in the Byzantine monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Constantinople.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.057

**Medieval Illuminated Page (A.D. 846) (bottom, left)**

Facsimile. Original at the Biblioteque Nationale de France, Paris, France.

This page features the early churchman and scholar Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin during the 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. This artwork was part of a lavishly illuminated Bible presented to the Frankish king Charles the Bald (grandson of Emperor Charlemagne) in A.D. 846. The top panel features Jerome sailing from Rome to Bethlehem and receiving payment for his efforts. The middle panel shows him translating the Bible and explaining it to his followers, who are also making copies. The bottom panel features Jerome handing Latin Vulgate Bibles to monks who will distribute them to the church.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.059

**Medieval Illuminated Page (A.D. 1170-1180)**

Facsimile. Original at the Biblioteque Nationale de France, Paris, France.

This is the first page of Matthew in the Capuchin's Bible which dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. It begins with the Latin Vulgate "Liber generations Iesu Chri filii David" ("The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David"). The "iber" of "Liber" is in the lower right portion of the "L," which is filled with a Tree of Jesse, a frequent motif in medieval art. (A stained glass Tree of Jesse window is located in Chartres Cathedral, which also dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century.) Jesus appears at the center top with Mary beneath Him. King David is at the center bottom, coming out of the side of Jesse, who is reclining along the bottom of the "L."

McNeese Collection—2019.001.058

### **Codex Leningrad**

Facsimile. Original at the National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Codex Leningrad is the oldest complete edition of the Hebrew Bible in existence. It dates to about 1008-1010 AD. Most modern printed Hebrew Bibles are based on the Leningrad Codex. It was commissioned in Cairo, Egypt and corrected against the Aleppo Codex. Although the early history of the Codex is unclear, it was discovered in modern times by Abraham Firkovich and taken to Odessa, Ukraine in 1838 and later transferred to the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg, formally Leningrad. It is currently housed in the National Library of Russia. This Facsimile edition was edited by David Noel Freedman and Astrid B. Beck and published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company in 1998. Wheeler Collection—2019.001.002

### **The Winchester Bible (Late 1100s)**

Facsimile. The Winchester Bible, one of the greatest works of art created in England, is a huge Romanesque, illuminated manuscript produced during the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Originally bound in two volumes, it was rebound in 1948 into four. The text is probably the work of a single scribe, but the illustrations were created by a series of artists over several decades. Although the text, which consists of the Old Testament, the New Testament, two versions of Psalms, and the Apocrypha, is complete, many of the illustrations have not been finished. Moreover, some of the illuminations and pages have been taken by thieves and collectors. The Bible is particularly known for the beauty and detail of its forty-eight major illustrated initial letters. This is the first page of Genesis. The text begins on the fourth line, “In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram” (“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”). The Winchester Bible may still be seen at the Winchester Cathedral Library, its home for more than eight centuries.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.068

### **Morgan Crusader Bible (1240)**

Facsimile. Original at the Morgan Library and Museum, New York City.

This Bible was commissioned by King Louis IX of France. Originally it had no text. The pictures—between two and four per page—are scenes from the Creation through the reign of King David painted as if they occurred in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. The thirty-five illustrations of battles, for instance, are filled with medieval knights, horses, banners, and artillery. In 1916, American financier John Pierpont Morgan purchased the manuscript which today resides in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City. This page pictures the events of I Samuel 15: 35-16:11. Samuel mourns after telling Saul he will no longer be king (top left). God then tells Samuel to go to Bethlehem to talk to Jesse and seven of his sons (bottom left), but God did not choose them. Instead, the next king is to be David, Jesse’s youngest son, who is on a nearby hill tending sheep. (bottom right). Note David’s harp leaning against a tree. The Latin captions are at the top and bottom and Persian inscriptions are in the left and right margins and around the Latin at the bottom. Hebrew characters are at the outside left and right margins and at the bottom underneath the Persian.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.056

### **The Great Helm, 1200s**

Replica. During the Crusades (ca. 1100-1250), armor worn by knights became more elaborate, including the development of helmets to cover the entire head rather than just the top of the skull. The Great Helm was a flat-topped, with a narrow visor allowing the knight to see. Such helmets were popular across Europe from 1220 to 1350. One variation of the Great Helm was the Sugarloaf, which featured a curving top. Notice the stylized brass cross inlay that covers the face of this helmet.

McNeese Collection – 2019.002.001

### **John Wycliffe Bible (1382-95) (right)**

Facsimile. John Wycliffe inspired the first translation of the Bible into English, but he did not do all the work himself. Wycliffe translated the New Testament, while Nicholas de Hereford translated much of the Old Testament. Because this translation is in Middle English—the same as Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*—it is not easy for modern readers. Although in 1408 it was declared that the reading of the Wycliffe translation would result in excommunication, it received relatively wide circulation and several hundred copies of “Wycliffite Bibles,” or portions, still survive in a variety of sizes and formats. One version is a two-volume Bible produced for Thomas of Woodstock, the youngest son of King Edward III. This page is the opening page of the gospel of Luke. The first four verses are not included in Wycliffe’s translation, and so Luke begins with 1:5. This page is taken from the two volume Wycliffe Bible located in the British Library.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.045

### **Page from 1656 Biblica Sacra Polyglot (Brian Walton) (left)**

Original Leaf. Polyglot (“many languages”) Bibles have been popular with scholars for centuries. Brian Walton, bishop of Chester, England, completed this example in 1656. Thomas Roycroft of London published it. Walton began the project in 1653 and finished the six volumes of the Old Testament, Apocrypha, the New Testament, and appendices in 1657. It was among the first books in England to have been printed by subscription. Scholars consider this the most accurate of all the polyglots and the one with the best apparatus. Languages added here for the first time are Ethiopic and Persian; these are in addition to Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic. This page is from Jeremiah ch. 1. (Christian Heritage Museum) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingston.

Wheeler Collection—2019.001.001

### **Gutenberg Bible (1450s)**

Facsimile. One of the most famous Bibles in history is the Gutenberg Bible. German printer Johannes Gutenberg’s edition represents the first substantial book printed with movable type. Gutenberg’s Bible “created a revolutionary way to spread . . . the sum total of human knowledge around the globe,” said TIME magazine in naming Gutenberg the Man of the Millennium. Gutenberg’s Bible is 1,282 pages of Latin Vulgate with paper copies bound in two volumes and vellum copies sometimes bound in three or four volumes. The

copy here is from a two-volume edition. When Gutenberg began printing his Bible, he printed the sheets twice, once for black ink and once for red for the headings, but he soon abandoned that and had the words in red added by hand. Space was left for illuminated decoration to be added, and so each Bible looks slightly different.

McNeese Collection. 2019.001.066

**German New Testament Translated by Martin Luther (1522)** (*top, left*)

Facsimile. Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German was both significant in the Reformation Movement and a watershed in the development of the German language. He translated the New Testament using an edition of Erasmus's Greek New Testament while he was hiding out in Wartburg Castle from the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. During this period it is said that he would leave the castle to visit nearby towns and markets to listen carefully to people speak. He returned to Wittenberg where he had taught theology at the university and went over his translation, line by line, with Philipp Melancthon, a friend and Greek professor. The first printing of Luther's New Testament was made by Wittenberg printer Melchoir Lotther in September, 1522. The pages shown here are the opening of the book of Romans.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.051

**Greek and Latin New Testament compiled by Erasmus (1516)** (*bottom, left*)

Facsimile. The first published Greek New Testament was part of a 1516 Greek-and-Latin New Testament compiled by Desiderius Erasmus, a Dutch scholar. Its importance is not so much that it was first, but because of its influence on other translations. Luther used Erasmus's Greek text to translate the New Testament into German, and Tyndale used it to translate the New Testament into English. And it was the foundation of the Greek *Textus Receptus* produced by Stephanus in 1550, a Greek New Testament text that was reprinted and studied for three hundred years. This is the first page of Matthew from a copy of the 1516 first edition of Erasmus's diglot (something having two languages at once) now in the library of the American Bible Society.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.042

**The Geneva Bible (1557-1560)** (*top, right*)

Facsimile. For more than fifty years the Geneva Bible was the Bible used by the common people of Britain. It became part of England's Protestant national identity. It was the Bible Shakespeare read and the Bible the Puritans (including the Mayflower Pilgrims) carried with them to New England. The New Testament was published in 1557 and the entire Bible in 1560. It was created by Protestant exiles in Geneva who fled from Bloody Mary's reign in England [1553-58]. It was endorsed by John Knox, and John Calvin (who wrote the introduction). It contained five fold-out woodcut maps and more than 300,000 words of notes to explain "the hard places." Everything about the Geneva Bible made it accessible to the average person. Available in small sizes and at modest prices, its typeface was easy to read, and it was the first English Bible to contain verse divisions. However, King James I did not like the Geneva Bible, as it challenged the divine right of kings. So he banned the Geneva Bible in England. This page has the end of Galatians and the opening of

Ephesians. A handwritten finger pointing to a note at the top left indicates an earlier reader thought the note was, well, noteworthy.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.052

### **John Tyndale Bible (1526) (bottom, right)**

Facsimile. The first New Testament printed in English was Tyndale's translation in 1526. A first printing, begun in Cologne, Germany in 1525, included notes in the margins. When the authorities learned of it, Tyndale and his assistant gathered up the pages that had been printed and fled 100 miles south to Worms. There they printed three—or perhaps six—thousand copies of a smaller size New Testament without notes. Only one copy of the Cologne pages exists (in the British Library), containing the first 22 chapters of Matthew. Until 1996 only two copies of the smaller 1526 Worms printing were known to exist, one in London's St. Paul's Cathedral and the other in the British Library, which the library purchased for \$2 million from Bristol Baptist College. In 1996, a third copy, the only complete one, was discovered in Stuttgart, Germany. The two pages shown here are the end of Luke and the beginning of John from the copy in the British Library.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.049

### **John Tyndale Martyrdom**

For his translation work and his criticisms of Henry VIII, Tyndale was finally arrested and charged with heresy in 1536. He was condemned to be burned at the stake. However, Tyndale was first strangled to death while tied to a stake and then his body was burned. His final words, "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes"

Ironically, within four years of his death, four English translations of the Bible were being published in England, all at the behest of the king. All were based on Tyndale's translation.

### **King James Bible Title Page (frontispiece) (1611) (top)**

Facsimile. The title page of the first printing of the King James Bible, a copper engraving, depicts at the top representations of God the Father (the Hebrew letters for YHWH), God the Spirit (the dove), and God the Son (the lamb in the oval). Peter (with the keys) and James are to the left and right of the oval, and the other apostles, including Paul, are in the background. Each of the four gospel writers is shown with a pen in his hand—Matthew at the top to the left of Peter, Mark at the top right, Luke at the bottom left, and John at the bottom right. Moses and Aaron are to the left and right of the title panel. Below is an oval with a picture of a pelican pecking her breast so that she can feed her young with her own blood in time of famine, a symbol of Christ's shedding his blood.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.044

### **King James Bible (1611) (bottom)**

Original Leaf. An original 400-year-old page from a King James Bible, produced from an early press run in London. The text was printed on a 100 percent rag cotton linen sheet, not wood pulp paper as are most books today, so it remains in excellent condition after four centuries. Each leaf of the original printings of the King James Bible was carefully

produced one-at-a-time by the King's printers using a movable-type press, and later bound together into whole Bibles. This page is from the book of Joshua, chapter 18:10 through chapter 19:8.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.060

### **King James Bible (1611)**

Reproduction. In 1604, England's James I called a conference at the Hampton Court Palace "for the reformation of some things amiss in ecclesiastical matters." During this conference, John Reynolds, leader of the Puritan delegation, proposed a new Bible translation. James agreed immediately. "I confess," the king said, "I have never seen a Bible well translated, and the worst is the Geneva." He knew that a new translation would reinforce his image as political and spiritual leader of his people. He directed the "best learned" in Cambridge and Oxford universities to do the translation. Ultimately, the KJV was done by a committee. The king appointed 54 scholars, divided into six committees, three to work on the Old Testament, two on the New Testament, and one on the Apocrypha. Their work was reviewed by various bishops. The "new translation" was published in 1611 with little fanfare. The first printing was not designed to be read in the home as was Tyndale's New Testament or the Geneva Bible. Instead, it was a large Bible, "appointed to be read in churches." The King James Version's eventual prominence over the popular Geneva Bible had as much to do with its association with the monarchy and the Geneva Bible's association with the Puritans as with translation quality or cost.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.061

### **Robert Aitken Bible (King James) (1782) (right)**

Reproduction. The first English-language Bible printed in America was printed in 1782 by Robert Aitken, a Philadelphia printer. During the American Revolutionary-era, Great Britain banned the exportation of Bibles to America. Aitken printed a New Testament in 1777, which was reprinted in 1778, 1779, and 1781. He then approached the revolutionary Congress for support to print a complete Bible. Although the money was never forthcoming, he printed 10,000 copies of his Bible anyway. By the time his Bibles were available, the Revolutionary War was over, and British Bible exports resumed, undercutting Aitken's prices. He ultimately lost money. But his work inspired others. By 1800, 15 editions of the New Testament and 20 of the entire Bible had been produced by American printers.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.065

### **New Testament: The Authorised English Version (1869) (left)**

Original. King James Bible with an introduction, and copious footnotes with alternate readings found in the Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Alexandrinus. Described on the title page as variations found in "the three Most Celebrated Manuscripts of the Original Greek Text." Constantin Tischendorf prepared the text notes along with a ten page introduction dated Leipzig, Christmas, 1868. The publication was volume 1000 in the British and American Authors collection from Bernhard Tauchnitz Publishers, Leipzig, Saxonia (Germany). Tischendorf discovered the Sinaiticus Codex in Egypt earlier

and was intent on providing textual comparisons between past translations and ancient texts.

Stanback Collection—2013.047.001

**Algonquin Bible (1660s) (top)**

Facsimile. These are pages from a translation of the Bible into the Massachusetts (also known as the Natick or Wampanoag) dialect of Algonquin. John Eliot, a pastor in Roxbury, Massachusetts, created the translation. His Bible is significant, because it represents the first time the entire Bible was translated into a language not native to the translator. The complete Bible was published in 1663 and a second printing was made after many of the original native Bibles were destroyed in 1675 during a colonial and Native American conflict known as King Philip's War. King Philip was a Wampanoag chief, the son of Chief Massasoit, who had befriended the *Mayflower* Pilgrims in 1621. The pages shown here are the end of Job and the beginning of Psalms from a copy in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.062

**Waadani Gospel of Mark Translated by Rachel Saint (1960s) (bottom)**

Facsimile. At the age of 17, Rachel Saint had a vision that someday she would live with indigenous peoples in the jungle. In 1955, she moved to a Spanish plantation in Ecuador where she could learn the Waadani native language. The following year, Rachel's brother, Nate Saint, and four other missionaries—Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Peter Fleming, and Jim Elliot—were killed by Waadani natives after they arrived in a village to teach them the Gospel. Three years later, Jim Elliot's widow, Elizabeth, their daughter, Valerie, and Rachel Saint returned to Ecuador to live with the Waadani, so they could learn their language which allowed Rachel to translate the Book of Mark. She completed her work in 1965. That summer, Nate Saint's three children asked to be baptized at the location where their father had been murdered. A native pastor and Christian convert, Kimo, performed the baptisms near the graves of the five missionaries. Kimo was the native who had speared Nate Saint. The two pages shown here are Mark 12:10-15 from a copy of the gospel that Rachel Saint translated.

McNeese Collection—2019.001.067