



Beyond a Text: The Life of Scripture Outside of the Words

Quayle Bible Collection
Open Saturdays & Sundays
September 9, 2018 ~ May 20, 2019

Reproducing the Word

Around 1455, Johannes Gutenberg produced the first Bible printed on moveable type which revolutionized Europe through mass public literacy, leading to the Protestant Reformation. However, not every Bible printed on the printing press was an exact copy. Not only were there mistakes, but Bibles were printed with different fonts, in various languages, and contained separate images. Even if the words were the same, each Bible was unique.

Through examining the historical production of the Bible, one can learn from the vast history of the physical book itself. The Bible means so much to over 3 billion people in the world, yet does each individual thoughtfully consider the form and structure of the book or how it came to be? The book as we know it is an adaptation of the codex, manuscripts that have been sewn together. Before the codex, there were other systems for storing writing, and there were other materials on which to write.

Given that the words themselves are precious, Bibles are often decorated in ornate ways. From pictures to gold leaf to stylized lettering, the Bible has been decorated throughout history, with early Protestants debating whether to decorate their holy text. Each individual Bible signifies its function. Is it large or small? Was it meant to be displayed or easily transported? Is it translated into a particular language for a specific group? Does it contain important information for who owned it? The mass production and physical creation of the Bible not only tells readers about the complex histories of Judaism and Christianity globally, but it also creates exact focal points in world history among nations, societies, and individuals.

Special thanks to those who helped guide and assemble this exhibit:

Lori Anne Ferrell, Claremont Graduate University

Chainy Folsom, University of Missouri, Kansas City

Mary Tusten, Baker University

Blythe Smith, Baker University

Ray Walling, Baker University

Scott Kimball, Baker University

Wonder Fair in Lawrence, KS

This exhibit is also created in the memory of John Prince Pumphrey, a papermaker for over 20 years.

The Story of Production

The North wall tells a story about the production of the Bible and any book. Through it you will see the many layers that the text went through, especially in the medieval period. It also tells of little known people, such as the female translators of the Bible or the Printers Devil. Below the last poster is a hands-on exhibit that allows you to feel different writing mediums that have been in use since antiquity.

Case 1. Early Textual Forms

What we call a book has experienced a long evolution of forms, which changed for use and functionality. The odd thing about the evolution is that texts have evolved from the more permanent to the less permanent, and even today the evolution has continued to electronic communication that is essentially immaterial. This evolution also follows literacy and the loss of sacredness in writing. As writing is more permanent and less people can read it, it is seen as more sacred.

Cuneiform, the earliest form of writing, was done on clay tablets, many of which would last for millennia. These texts spanned a wide array of genre, including mythic texts, lists of gods, laws, contracts, and simple, everyday receipts. Another example of early forms is the Torah scroll, written on animal parchment. Given that Judaism is a primary religion today, the scroll holds a central place in worship as the example of God's covenant at Mt. Sinai. It is seen as a sacred object and is placed in a special cabinet. Containing only the first five books of the Bible, it is read in succession and physically not a text is easily accessible for reference reading as one cannot simply flip from Genesis to

Deuteronomy. Since Christianity developed from Judaism with a mission to convert people, Christians needed a practical way to flip from one book to the next. As a result, early Christians utilized the codex, which held several individual manuscripts sewn together as a book. This allowed them to be able to read several books with ease. Although invented by the Romans, it was utilized by the Christians, and revolutionized how the world read texts.

Case 2. Writing Mediums

Much like the textual forms, the writing mediums also changed. Most cultures wrote on what was available to them. Some of the earliest “paper” that was used came from Ancient Egypt in the form of papyrus. Papyrus was made from the reeds of the Nile, which is why the god of writing, Thoth, is an ibis. Many cultures wrote on animal skins or parchment. Although paper as we know it was invented in China, the first paper mills were established during the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258 CE). After the Crusades, Europe began manufacturing paper. The irony is that paper is less permanent than the other mediums seen here; however, it is easier to produce.

Case 3. Watermarks

As Europeans began creating paper, they also started adding identifying markers in the paper. These are known as watermarks. The papermaker would change the thickness of the paper and thus a shadowy effect would be created. In some papers, the watermark is barely visible and in others it is quite obvious. Try to see the one on the Gutenberg leaf on display between the two cases. The watermarks vary in style and meaning, many of which are unknown. There are

theories that watermarks meant something specific, while others suggest they are merely artistic. Scholars also theorize that watermarks varied between individual papermakers, meaning they could be used to identify the paper producer. Regardless, watermarks are a fundamental aspect of many early paper Bibles, including the King James, and they are often overlooked by casual viewers and readers.

Case 4. Initial Letters

Initial letters are some of the most recognizable features to early Bibles. An initial letter is a stylistic letter that begins chapters, paragraphs, or books. The styles range from elaborate stories depicted within the letter to stylistic calligraphy. Some tell the stories of the biblical chapter within the letter, while others contain animals, mythological beings, or garden motifs. Many of these were hand drawn,



while others were made from woodcuts. In some cases, the printer would use whatever initial letters that were commonly available without thought, which is why some early King James Bibles have the Roman god Triton in various initial letters. One of the most

famous initial letters is from the first chapter of Genesis in the Dove's Press Bible, which can be seen opposite this case, beneath the tapestry.

Case 5. Marbling

Like the production of paper, Europeans took the skill of marbling from Muslims that they encountered in the Middle East. The technique began appearing in European texts in the 1700s, and was often called Turkish marbling; however, it was probably developed almost a thousand years earlier in China. The technique involves adding colors to water and introducing industrial chemicals or plant based chemicals. This results in some colors moving forward and shaping or “sizing” the pigments around it. The artist would sometimes comb the colors to create different effects. Afterwards, a piece of paper is introduced and the color adheres to the paper. After it became popular, Europeans began lining books and even chests with marbled paper. Eventually, they would also introduce the color to the edges of the pages to create a marbling effect on the outside of the book.

Case 6. Engraving/Woodcuts

Images in Bibles have not always been a tradition for all Christians. Different sects of Christianity believed that images in the text were a way to inform the reader about the story, add an artistic decoration on the text, or believed that images were borderline idol worship. In the height of Protestant Reforms, Bibles contained fewer images. However, there is a long history of having either hand drawn images, woodcuts, or engraved images in the text.

The difference between woodcuts and engravings were essentially how the image was produced and how the ink was transferred. Woodcuts are like stamps where an image would be carved out of a wood block. Engravings on wood or copper required the artist to incise the material with the

image. In a woodcut, the ink was on the outside and negative space was formed by incisions, while engravings required the ink to fill the incisions. In many cases, woodcuts and engravings would be used again and again in Bibles, even in different translations and denominations. In some instances, they would be altered slightly or even painted after the impression. The most significant work for woodcuts is the Nuremburg Chronicle of 1491, which contains almost 2,000 woodcuts. The Quayle Bible Collection owns a copy of the Chronicle.

Case 7. Marginalia

In many cases, the owners of a Bible literally leave their mark on the text. Owners who have no qualms with writing in the Bible will add glosses, doodles, annotations, and commentary to the margins of text. These *marginalia* often give scholars a window into the specific owners of the text. What Bible verses and chapters did they value the most? What specific theology did they have? In what language did they write? In the case of handwritten texts, sometimes the reader can find corrections written at the end of the chapter or in the margin. These mistakes show us the lives of scribes and the nature of their field, as well as how difficult the task of copying a Bible was. Even though the text was so sacred, errors were sometimes made. These notes and corrections offer readers a text living within another text.

Case 8. Afro-Asiatic Translations

As soon as the first Christian church was founded in Antioch (in modern day Turkey), texts were being dispersed in various translations. Although the founders of Christianity spoke in Aramaic and wrote in Greek, they began to mission

to all the nations around them. This required the ability to write and speak in other languages. The book of Acts describes a scene where the Holy Spirit descends on the Apostles and they began to speak in various tongues, or glossolalia. Not only was this act a reversal of the Tower of Babel story from Genesis, but it was a statement that no language is holier than the next. The Word could be transmitted in any translation. Many of the earliest translations of ancient texts were done in the languages of the Middle East and North Africa. Since Christianity has been centered on Europe and the Latin and Germanic languages, many American, English-speaking Christians forget that the Bible exists in multiple languages foreign to them, such as Arabic and the other languages in this case. Given that concepts, metaphors, and emphasis are often lost in translations, some of the languages of the Middle East probably retain meaning closer to the Aramaic spoken during the time of Jesus.

Case 9. “American” Translations

Although many people came to America to create new identities, aspects of their European identities remained. Even when colonists were rejecting Britain and throwing tea in harbors, they were still importing British Bibles. As immigrants to America settled in various locations throughout the colonies, they brought Bibles in the languages of their homelands with them as remnants of the home they left. However, as these European immigrants colonized the Americas, they also tried to convert the Native Americans that were here. In many cases this was done not only as a way to “save souls” but to force Indigenous communities to assimilate to European ways. As soon as Europeans began colonization in the Americas, missionary

attempts soon followed. As a result, the first Bible translations in America were in several Native American languages and while even at war with Britain, the King James Bible was steadily being used. As settlers from Germany, Sweden, Denmark, or other Northern European Nations spread throughout North America, their languages were kept alive in the Bibles that they brought.

Case 10. Family Bibles and Genealogical Records

For many years, a Bible was an investment. It was large, it contained works of art, and it was expensive, often requiring families to pay for it in instalments. Families would purchase a Bible, and it was meant to stay with the family for generations, carrying with it the history of a community. These Bibles sometimes contain flowers, leaves, important news clippings, feathers, and locks of hair. As mass production began in the 1800s, these books lost their value, often being made from papier-mâché, but they never lost their price tags. Regardless of their material and worth, these texts never lost their value to the family that owned it, who still recorded the history of their people, and unbeknownst to them, histories of America. The settlement of Kansas can be traced through the various languages represented in the Quayle Bible Collection's Family Bibles.

For Further Reading

The Book: A Cover-to-Cover Exploration of the Most Powerful Object of Our Time. Keith Houston. (2016)

Five Hundred Years of Printing. S. H. Steinberg. (2017)

The Bible and the Printed Image in Early Modern England. Michael Gaudio. (2018)

Marbled Paper: Its History, Techniques, and Patterns. Richard Wolfe. (1990)

Paper: Paging Through History. Mark Kurlansky. (2017)

Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft. David Hunter. (2011)

The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions. Bruce M. Metzger. (2001)

The Face of Water: A Translator on Beauty and Meaning in the Bible. Sarah Ruden. (2017)

Manifold Greatness: The Making of the King James Bible, by Julian Reid and Helen Moore. (2011)

To Visit:

Drop in for a visit between 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm any Saturday or Sunday. To arrange for a visit at another time or for a group tour, please call.

You may want to consider visiting other sites in Baldwin City such as the Osborne Chapel, the Holt-Russell Gallery, the Old Castle Museum, or the Lumberyard Arts Center.

Contact Information:

518 8th Street
Baldwin City, KS
Phone: 785.594.8414
Email: quayle@bakeru.edu
Web: www.bakeru.edu/quayle

Follow & Like Us on Facebook @The Quayle Bible Collection
<https://www.facebook.com/The-Quayle-Bible-Collection-221702718028953/>