

PRE-MODERN BIBLES: FROM THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS TO THE COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOT BIBLE

By: Janis Elliott, Ph.D.

Associate Professor Art

and

John Howe, Ph.D.

Professor of History

The Bible is etymologically The Book, a stable center for Judaism and, once supplemented by an additional twenty-seven books, for Christianity. Yet, over millennia, biblical texts have changed in their format, in modes of interpretation, and in ways of presentation. Brilliant scholars and theologians have wrestled with these texts, studying them in multiple ways, some of which have become basic to contemporary forms of intellectual inquiry. Who we are and how we think have been profoundly influenced by biblical studies.

From Aug. 18, 2018 to March 3, 2019, the Museum of Texas Tech University will host an unprecedented exhibit on *Pre-Modern Bibles: From the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Complutensian Polyglot Bible*. Here will be found the largest collection of original and facsimile biblical manuscripts ever assembled in West Texas, displayed to illustrate the evolution of the physical Bible, the development of scholarly methods of biblical analysis, the refinement of multiple ways to convey biblical learning, often to people of limited literacy, and the creation, in Spain at the end of the Middle Ages, of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, which summarized these scholarly traditions and also, with its elaborate multilingual printing press fonts, looked toward a new modern era of biblical scholarship.

Why is Texas Tech commemorating an ancient monument of biblical scholarship? The exhibit provides an occasion to take

a historical look at the culturally seminal importance of biblical studies. It honors the quincentenary of an important biblical project that appeared from 1517 to 1520. It also helps us recall some of Texas Tech's historical and aspirational roots, inasmuch as the Spanish revival architecture of the Texas Tech campus and the Complutensian Polyglot Bible can both be traced back to the same source, a university in north-central Spain, the Universidad Complutense at Alcalá de Henares. It relocated to Madrid during the 19th century. This renaissance university was the creation of Cardinal Francisco Ximenes (1436-1517), a former hermit who became the chaplain of Columbus's patroness Queen Isabella of Castille. Although today most Americans know Ximenes only as the lead character of a famous Monty Python comedy sketch about how Nobody Expects the Spanish Inquisition, he was in fact a pious statesmen and reformer who believed that a proper understanding of the Bible could lead to a reformed Christianity. To that end he diverted whatever funds he could gather into his new university whose major project would be to create an edition of the Bible that, thanks to the new printing press technology, could make the word of God available in all the major biblical source languages. The result was not only a tour de force of printing technology and biblical scholarship, but also the creation of the academic setting that would inspire Texas Tech.

In 1923, architect William Ward Watkin, seeking a suitable architectural style for a new university on the High Plains of Texas, looked to the High Plains of Spain, the region of the Extremadura, and modeled Texas Tech's first building, the Administration Building, on the university at Alcalá. Other Spanish echoes, including the team name Matadors, would soon follow. Celebrating this quincentenary allows Texas Tech,



now designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution, to recollect the Spanish revival traditions that have always been part of campus heritage.

In the interdisciplinary exhibit *Pre-Modern Bibles: From the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Complutensian Polyglot Bible* we are seeking to present our research to a broader community.

“University professors sometimes find ourselves talking only to each other, and not to the people of Texas who pay our salaries,” said Howe. “It is challenging, as well as fun, to look beyond academic journals and to attempt to present what we know in a public exhibit.”

Among the co-sponsors of the exhibition are Texas Tech University, the Museum of Texas Tech, and The Remnant Trust. The Remnant Trust is lending several major original manuscripts, such as a 16th century Greek and Latin New Testament, a 16th century Torah scroll, and a 13th century Paris Vulgate Bible. Other precious materials will be furnished by the Lanier Theological Library, the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas at Austin, and the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Library and Southwest Collection of Texas Tech, and the libraries of Abilene Christian, Baylor, and Western Michigan Universities all are providing loans of handsome facsimile manuscripts. Many of the manuscripts included in the exhibition are facsimiles because manu-

Financial support comes not only from the Museum of Texas Tech but also from the Helen Jones Foundation, a Humanities Texas Major Grant for a Community Project, and a Civic Lubbock Cultural Arts Grant.

The first part of the exhibit will attempt to show how the material Bible came to exist as it does. The Lanier Theological Library is lending a facsimile of a Complutensian Polyglot Bible as well as two replicas of Dead Sea scrolls. From Jesse Scott of Lubbock Christian University comes a Dead Sea Scroll facsimile jar. The exhibition will explain the transitions from scroll to codex, the form of book we use today that triumphed in Late Antiquity, probably as a result of Christian use of scripture. Codex books are easier to consult for multiple liturgical readings and they are cheaper to produce in quantity because you can write on both sides of the page. The exhibition will include facsimiles of some of the early Christian codices, such as the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and the eighth century Codex Amiatinus. Also included will be a facsimile of the ninth century Utrecht Psalter and one of its famous English copies. The Utrecht Psalter is an example of the artistic display of religious exuberance typical of some Carolingian manuscripts, and it is one of the continental manuscripts that were sent to Canterbury to inspire copies after the Viking raids destroyed most of the British libraries in the 10th century.



scripts, which are hand-written and painted, are unique and too precious to travel from their home libraries.

“In order to illustrate our narrative about the development of biblical scholarship we needed to display manuscripts that demonstrate the importance of art in communicating the stories of the Bible,” says Elliott. “Facsimile editions provide us with a glimpse of how text and image worked together in some of the most spectacularly decorated medieval manuscripts that we might never otherwise see.”



Codex Amiatinus (Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Cod. Amiatino I), Frontispiece, 8th century



Complutensian polyglot Bible. (Rome, Library of the Society of Jesus), Frontispiece, 1517/20

Examples of scribal tools and materials will reveal the complex process involved in creating large books. Yet separate volumes for Pentateuchs, Psalters, Prophets, Gospels, Epistles, etc., were the norm, far from the single-volume complete bibles used today. The earliest surviving examples of complete one-volume bibles only appear in the seventh century. The order of all the books in these codex bibles was not definitively standardized until the 13th century. Even later, after Protestant reformers reverted to a Hebrew canon for the Old Testament, some books identified as apocrypha, which are biblical writings that are not the accepted canon of Scripture, were dropped or marginalized. The form of the Christian Bible has changed over the centuries.

The second part of the exhibit attempts to reveal not only the sophistication of pre-modern biblical scholarship but also how it relates to academic traditions today. This includes the belief in multiple senses of scriptural interpretation still basic to today's literary theories. The development of marginal glosses, which are comments or annotations in the margins of a book or commentary that is formatted around the text, will be presented as ancestral to modern-day scholarly apparatus, such as footnotes that still drive students crazy. Exhibition space will be devoted to the development of images of Biblical scholar, and to their metamorphoses into modern images of academics—this will include evangelist portraits and modern images of inspired

academics. A subgenre involves learned academics working in their studies, a portrait tradition extending from the sixth century through a variety of Renaissance examples, to the photographs taken today of modern authors at work. There will also be a section dedicated to the collaboration between Jewish and Christian biblical scholars from the High Middle Ages to the start of the early modern period.

Biblical texts could be found in the tiniest of books of hours and in giant lectern bibles that might weigh 70 or 80 pounds. Vernacular translations and paraphrases could present scripture, although church authorities were sometimes hostile to non-Latin scriptures that lacked orthodox glosses, interpretative apparatus, or approved theological vetting. Yet in a largely non-literate world, a universal church presented scripture in ways not limited strictly to reading the letters of texts. Pope Gregory the Great, whose large oil portrait also will be on display, argued that art was the bible of the illiterate, the means to instruct those who could not read. Biblical messages were presented in multiple media and genres. The exhibition includes a variety of illustrated bibles. Comic-book style illustrations and biblical paraphrases made bible texts more accessible. Some space will be devoted to moralized bibles that tell the biblical stories with an abbreviated text and use the power of images to communicate. Biblical content also was presented through personal books of hours and through sermons which were delivered in church or published in written collections. By the 15th century, the printing press could make biblical texts available in standardized, less expensive formats, and the new technology signaled the



Roman School. Pope Gregory the Great. Oil on canvas, c. 1620 BF.1984.21

end of the period of hand-made, manuscript bibles. The earliest printed bibles remained largely in Latin and were expensive to produce. The break between a high-quality manuscript Bible, such as the Mainz Bible, and the new printed bibles such as the Gutenberg Bible, was not initially too dramatic but, ultimately, mass-produced printed bibles would reshape Christian ecclesiastical structures.

which will bring us to the point of seeing how the future was transformed by the technology of the printing press.

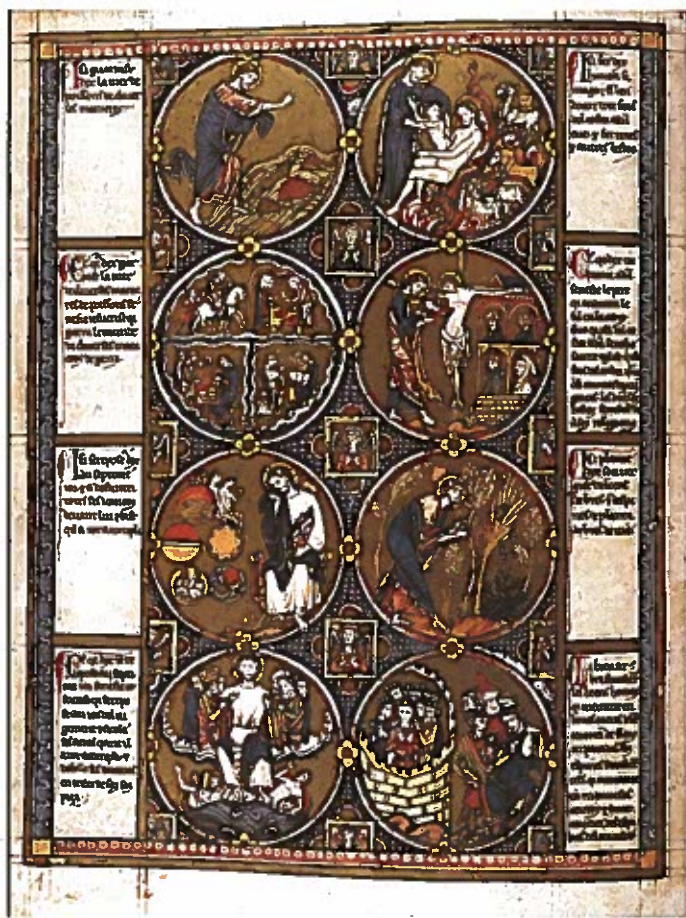
Visitors to *Pre-Modern Bibles: From the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Complutensian Polyglot Bible*, will find delight in the variety of bibles and their colorful illuminations. The chronological extent is daunting, over 1,000 years, yet the narrative maintains focus on the trajectory of biblical scholarship and its relationship to the development of western civilization in the middle ages. The exhibition will succeed in its purpose if it is able to raise questions about traditional models of biblical studies that jump from the earliest surviving manuscripts to the printed bibles of the Protestant Reformation. Between those points lies a varied world of biblical study that was sometimes intellectually and visually brilliant and that ultimately helped shape our modern intellectual world.

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<http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?dir=prev&folioNo=8&lid=en&quireNo=34&side=v&zoomSlider=0>



Vienna Moralized Bible (Vienna, ÖNB Cod. 2534), Genesis scenes, c. 1225

The final section of the exhibition will be devoted to the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, whose pages are laid out to include bible passages in four columns in different languages: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Aramaic. This bible will introduce the Spanish context that gave rise to this project, including King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, and their efforts to create a new, more integrated Spanish kingdom and church. They were aided by Cardinal Francisco Ximénes de Cisneros, and by his attempt to revive old schools and universities, symptomatic of the creativity of the early Spanish Renaissance, which would ultimately harden in a more ideological response to Protestant challenges. The Spanish Renaissance would produce the Universidad Complutense at Alcalá de Henares, whose relationship with Texas Tech will be demonstrated in the exhibition, and the Complutensian Polyglot Bible that will be presented as the culmination of a long tradition of themes related to multilingual, cross cultural, biblical scholarship,



Complutensian polyglot Bible (Rome, Library of the Society of Jesus). 1517/1520