



**C**HRISTENDOM CELEBRATES the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, and in honor of this event, Bowden Collections is offering an exhibition with over forty works. This exhibition offers the viewer an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable treasure that God has given humanity—the gift of the Bible. *Sola Scriptura: Biblical Text and Art* is a visual testimony of how the Scriptures have compelled artists who cherish the Bible to incorporate its text into their art. The exhibition is comprised of three sections: Translating the Bible, Illuminating the Bible and Picturing the Bible.

Martin Luther's ground breaking translation has made it possible for Christians over the last 500 years to read the Bible in the vernacular. The impact of this cannot be overstated. Artists are among those who have been influenced by reading and studying the Bible, often incorporating the words of the Scriptures into the very fiber of their art.

The exhibition's first segment, **Translating the Bible**, includes portrait engravings of Martin Luther; an 1883 poster commemorating the 400th anniversary of his birth, an 1875 Martin Luther German Bible with illustrations by Gustave Doré, and a single leaf from an early edition of Luther's 1529 New Testament. Several other Bibles illustrate the importance of the English vernacular translations over these five centuries. Among these is a leaf from 16th century *Tyndale Bible*, *The Great Bible* approved by King Henry VIII; a leather bound *King James Bible* with an accompanying single leaf from the first 1611 edition, and Eugene Peterson's contemporary paraphrase, *The Message*.

The second section, **Illuminating the Bible**, explores the diverse ways scribes and calligraphers have illuminated the biblical text with imagination and devotion. This segment includes ancient and

medieval illuminations: a 13th century illuminated manuscript from France of I Corinthians 6; 15th century illuminated pages from the *Vulgate*; and a bifolio antiphonal parchment manuscript used by medieval choirs. Also included are several recent calligraphic creations: *The Holy Bible* illuminated by Timothy Botts and accompanied by a single piece, *I Have Plans for You*; Barry Moser's hand typeset *New Testament* and one of his engravings; two Ethiopian prayer books; and a contemporary Celtic illumination by Nancy Snooks.



**Picturing the Bible** features more than a dozen artists who use the biblical text as an integral part of their creations. These evidence the power of the Bible, which has compelled artists to embed its very words into their art. Some of those in the show include: William Blake's *Vision of Eliphaz*; two pieces by Howard Finster inscribed with his own personal paraphrase of the biblical text; an etching by Sue Coe relating to the Beatitudes; a delicately collaged cross form by David Kamm, and two elegant drawings by Doug Jacques. Adam Back, Andrew Barchus, Martha Chatelain, Sandra Bowden and Guy Chase have created more dimensional works that use the artists' book as a foundation.



# TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

## Luther's Bible

October 31, 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther pinning the ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, a pivotal event that launched the Protestant Reformation. Although it was common practice for a teacher to post topics for his coming lectures, the outcry and response to his thoughts was more than he expected. Luther was outraged at some of the practices of the church, especially the selling of indulgences. His understanding of Romans 1:17, the just shall live by faith, convinced him that it was through the Scriptures, or to use his words, *sola scriptura*, that we find God's direction and purpose for living. Because of these views he was adamant that the reading of the Bible should not be for the few elite leaders of the church who could read Latin, but rather the Word of God should be available to everyone.

What has become known as the Protestant Reformation was only one of many attempts at reforming the church. Two conditions aligned to make this reform more powerful and longer lasting—the German political situation that pitted the aristocracy against the papacy, and the invention of the printing press. Around 1450 Johann Gutenberg began experimenting with movable type, and in 1456 he published what is known as the *Gutenberg Bible*. In this exhibition a photograph of a copy owned by Morgan Library shows the impressiveness of these volumes. Numerous other translations in the vernacular existed before Luther, but none had the ability to be mass-produced. Movable type and the printing press changed church history.

Because of his beliefs and teachings Luther was summoned to the 1521 Diet of Worms to recant his position, only to respond with his infamous saying, "Here I

stand, I cannot do otherwise." For this he was declared an outlaw and excommunicated by Pope Leo X. He was given shelter and protection using the name of Junker Jörg (Knight George) at Wartburg Castle under the protection of Elector Frederick the Wise.

Luther was convinced that the common person needed to read the Bible, so while he was sequestered in the Wartburg Castle (1521–22) he began translating the New Testament into German. He made forays into nearby towns and markets to listen to people speaking so he could translate as close as possible to the German contemporary language. Interestingly, his translation helped to solidify the German language. He used Erasmus' second edition (1519) of the Greek New Testament to translate rather than the Vulgate, the official fourth century Latin translation of the Roman Catholic Church. His *New Testament* was first published in 1522, and the complete Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments and Apocrypha, was released in 1534. The *Title Page for First Thessalonians* from the 1529 edition of the Luther's New Testament is included in this exhibition, along with an 1875 *Heilige Schrift*, which has numerous illustrations by Gustave Doré. Luther's translation is the most important work of his whole life as he brought the teaching and life of Christ to the hearts and minds of the Germans. He made the Bible the people's book.

## English Bibles

The many vernacular Bible translations made it possible for the common people in England, Germany, France, and Switzerland to read the Bible in their own language. The struggle to develop an English translation began with John Wycliffe, a 14th century advocate for a Bible in the vernacular. He was the first to complete a hand-written English translation in 1384, but as a result he was declared a heretic and his works were banned and burned—only two copies survived. The clergy feared that if the people could read the Bible, the Church would lose its control and income. Wycliffe had come to regard the Scriptures as the only reliable guide to the truth. These beliefs made him a forerunner to the Protestant Reformation.



Luther Bible

## Tyndale Bible

William Tyndale was a brilliant scholar fluent in eight languages. He is sometimes considered the architect of the English language, evident in the fact that many of the phrases he coined remain part of our language today. He was profoundly influenced by the writings of Erasmus, a Dutch scholar who taught at Oxford and who believed that the Scriptures should be translated into every language. Meeting resistance from the religious authorities, Tyndale fled to Germany and visited Martin Luther while he was at Wartburg. He was persuaded to move forward with the English translation, which he completed in 1525 and printed in Cologne. Copies were then smuggled into England, confiscated by the clergy, and burned. *The Title Page with Prologue for the Epistle of James* from a 1549 edition of Tyndale's Bible is included in this exhibition. Later he was arrested and jailed in Brussels with a conviction of heresy and executed by strangulation—his body burned at the stake in 1536.

## The Great Bible

Tyndale's dying prayer was that the King of England would embrace his version. Three years later King Henry VIII authorized and funded its printing, with some minor revisions. This Bible was placed in every church, often chained to the pulpit, and a reader was made available for the illiterate to hear God's Word in plain English. This translation became known as *The Great Bible*, partially for its size, measuring 14 inches in height. As a result, the *Tyndale Bible* continued to play a key role in spreading the Reformation throughout the British Empire.

## Geneva Bible

Queen Mary I came to the throne in 1553. Rejecting the break with the Roman Catholic Church and establishment of the Anglican Church, she quickly began to turn England back to Catholicism. Using force, she killed hundreds of Protestant leaders, earning the title Bloody Mary. Many Protestant scholars fled to Geneva, Switzerland, the home of John Calvin, where they worked on a new translation of the Bible that became known as the *Geneva Bible*. The first full edition of this Bible was printed in 1560, but dozens of editions continued until around 1660. The Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew, and the New Testament from scholarly editions of the New Testament. This was the first Bible to use numbered verses. It had several study guides, woodcut illustrations, and marginal notes. The *Geneva Bible* became known as the 'mass Bible' because it was smaller and more affordable than previous translations. An original page of the *Geneva Bible* from



## King James Bible

Genesis with a wood engraving of Noah's ark is part of this exhibition. William Shakespeare used the *Geneva Bible* and it was the Bible the Pilgrims brought to the New World.

## King James Bible

In 1604, Protestant clergy asked King James I of England to consider another English translation. They wanted a version with scriptural references for cross-referencing and clarification only, in contrast with the controversial notes found in the *Geneva Bible*. The work was assembled, and in 1610 the new Bible went to press. Previously, translations were the work of a single person, but having a prominent group of scholars work on the translation distinguished the King James Version from earlier Bibles. In 1611, the *King James Bible* was released, and for more than 400 years it has been the household Bible of the English speaking world, renowned for its majestic style and marvelous prose.

Since the *King James Version* was published there have been too many English translations to count, many manifesting new interpretations because of archaeological findings. But, with the whole Bible translated into nearly 600 languages and portions translated into almost 3,000 languages, it is evident that people still have the need and passion for translating the Word.

## The Message

*The Message*, by Eugene Peterson, is a marvelous example of continued efforts to have the Bible published in a contemporary language. It is not specifically a translation, but rather a paraphrase. According to the introduction to the New Testament, its "contemporary idiom keeps the language of the Message (Bible) current, fresh, and understandable." In just a few years it has become extremely popular; transcending denominations and age distinctions. Recently a Catholic version was released, complete with the Apocrypha.



## ILLUMINATING THE BIBLE

The Bible has a unique place in the history of the book. Before the advent of the printing press, no text was more frequently revered by the faithful, labored over by scribes and illuminators, studied by the scholars, or coveted by the rich and powerful. Many Bibles were written and decorated by monks and other members of religious communities as part of their life of sacrificial praise to God. Some were intended for personal study and meditation, while others were used for public reading as a physical symbol of the presence of God in the community.

Today's Bible is different in many respects from the hand copied manuscripts used during the first 1500 years of Christendom. While the text has remained the same, the format is much different. A typical modern Bible is a one volume, with clear divisions of books, chapters and verses. This was not so in medieval times.

In the fifth century, the Bible began to include significant decorations and embellishments that included Christian

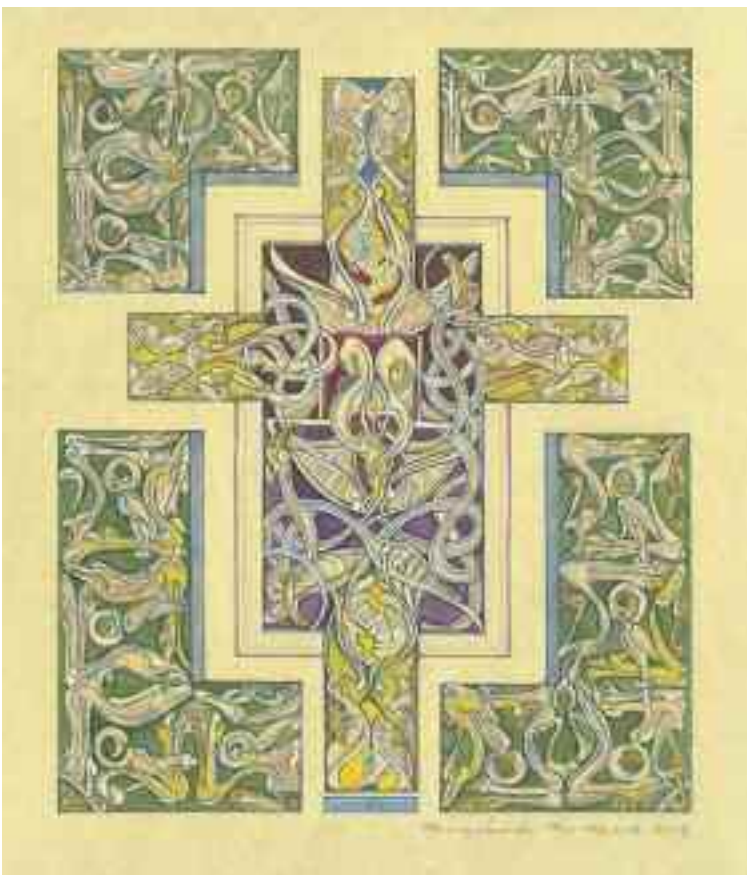


*Double Antiphon*

symbols and images related to the text. For the next thousand years, images were used as illuminations to add interest, beauty and help convey meaning. They enhanced or illuminated the stories. The term illumination comes from the Latin *illuminare*, which means to light up. Illuminations were painted decorations added after text was handwritten or printed. Technically, an illuminated manuscript was one decorated with gold or silver that reflects light both physically and spiritually.

Up to the twelfth century, most manuscripts were produced in the scriptorium of monasteries. The majority of surviving manuscripts are from the Middle Ages, although many exist from the Renaissance, while very few illuminated manuscript fragments survived on papyrus. Some medieval manuscripts, illuminated or not, were written on parchment (usually of calf, sheep, or goat skin), but most manuscripts important enough to illuminate were written on the best quality of parchment called vellum. In this exhibition, the *bifolium Antiphonal Leaves* were written on parchment while both the 13th century *Book of Hours* with 1 Corinthians, and the 15th century *French Book of Hours* are on vellum.

In the late Middle Ages manuscripts began to be produced on paper. These were many times created with wide margins and spaces for illuminated initials and decorations, but the introduction of the printing press rapidly led to the decline of embellishments. With the development of the printing press, nearly all Bibles were printed on paper, the first of which was the *Gutenberg Bible* of 1445. A photograph of the copy at the Morgan Library in New York offers a glance at these rare and beautiful books. Note that large margins were left for illuminators to add their embellishments, and as a result each Gutenberg Bible is unique. The *Arabic-Latin Bible Leaf* of 1591 and the later 17th century *French Bible Page* are two examples



*Look at the Birds*, by Nancy Snooks



*Ethiopian illustrated manuscript*

that demonstrate how important the woodcut later became as a way to illuminate the text with illustrations of the particular biblical event.

Before the 15th century western music was written by hand and preserved in manuscripts, usually bound in large volumes. The striking and rare bifolium (two adjoining leaves) musical score in this exhibition has Latin lyrics from a Spanish Antiphony. Since there was no commercially printed music, these choir books were placed on a large music stand while the choir stood in a semi-circle singing from the single score. *Alleluia Page 307* was created on paper, so it dates later than those on vellum. The text is from the Vulgate that was the liturgical language of the church and quotes from both Psalm 18 and 1 Peter 1: The Lord is my rock, and my refuge, and my deliverer: Glory. Alleluia, alleluia. He proved me, as one that had the owner of the gold that was through the fire.

Even in the 20th century illumination of the biblical text lives on. The New Testament, designed and illustrated by Barry Moser and published by Pennyroyal Caxton Press in 1999, is a stunningly hand bound letterpress edition with 57 engravings. *The Holy Bible* is the magnum opus of Barry Moser's career. It is the only 20th century Bible with original illustrations by one artist for every book of the Old and New Testaments. The last time this feat

was accomplished was in 1865 by Gustave Doré.

*The Holy Bible* published by Tyndale and illuminated with Timothy Botts' expressive word pictures becomes a window into the whole Bible, offering us a beautiful array of modern calligraphic illuminations. Botts has chosen 360 Bible passages and rendered them in his unique and personal style that visualizes the meaning of the text. One of these, *The Plans I have for You*, along with a copy of the Bible are part of *Sola Scriptura*.

Celtic illuminations fascinated Nancy Snooks with their intricate detail and memorizing patterns. At first glance her illumination, *Look at the Birds*, appears imageless. However, bird forms buried in all the swirling detail begin to emerge upon close observation. The interweaving of images express

vividly the unity and interdependence of all creation. The passage from the Gospel of Matthew reminds us of our complete dependence on God, and our need to trust His care for us.

Illuminating the Bible with a variety of examples from different time periods helps to expand our appreciation for how the church has cherished the Bible. Such care, much imagination, and hours of laborious work have given us splendid and beautiful manuscripts that need to be appreciated and preserved for the future. Most of all they help us celebrate God's Word in ways that just words cannot do alone.



*New Testament, by Barry Moser*



*God's Minute*, by Guy Chase

## PICTURING THE BIBLE

Beginning in the second century Christians used art as a way to express their deeply held beliefs. Early Christians used Roman iconography but gave new meanings to these pagan symbols. The grapevine and the good shepherd are two examples. However, they also developed their own symbols, such as the fish (ikhtus) and the anchor. The Early Christians used the media of their culture including frescos, mosaics and sculptures, and their style reflected the Roman trends, such as in the fresco paintings found in the catacombs of Rome—some of the earliest Christian art. Many sarcophagi from this period illustrated biblical stories and showed how new symbols were emerging.

From the earliest time in Christianity, the art of the faithful also included writing and text, many times using word symbols, such as with the Chi-Rho Cross. This desire to use words has continued over the centuries. *Sola Scriptura*: Biblical Text and Art's last section, *Picturing the Bible*, focuses on how artists continue to embed the words of the Bible into the very fiber of their art.

From the earliest relief sculptures on funerary containers, to medieval illuminations and then modern art, vibrant and intriguing art continues to explore the interface between the visual and verbal images and ancient texts. Artists have literally been translating from the "language of words" to the "language of images" as they explore the mysterious realm between these two worlds. Word and image collaborate to flesh out meaning and intent more fully.

Several of the artists in *Picturing the Bible* have encircled their drawing or image with words from Scripture. William Blake's *Vision of Eliphaz* is an excellent example of this. Blake was a visionary, deeply influenced by the Gothic and Middle Ages. Nearly all his prints were book illustrations. Blake's *Job* is the last series he completed, and the illustrations unfold as a commentary using the margins to provide a visual and textural emphasis to points of meaning. He does this by quoting from the Book of Job: **Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man, be more pure than his Maker? Behold he putteth no trust in his Saints and his angels he chargeth with folly. Then a Spirit passed before my face and the hair of my flesh stood up.**

Doug Jaques' two powerful drawn charcoal drawings, *Prostate Petitioner* and *Restrained*, include the handwritten biblical passages that inspired his work. In *The Good News Shoes*, Joan Bohlig has encircled her charming etching of shoes stacked on a back hall rack with the Isaiah 52:7 passage: **"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good things, who publishes salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"**

A number of the artists have used the biblical text itself to communicate their love of the Bible. Rev. Howard Finster, a Baptist minister and one of the most important America folk artists of the his art. *Sins on this Earth* demonstrates how he used his art as a vehicle to 'preach' the Word of God.

Matt Plescher has created an overall pattern titled *Glyphs*, consisting of text from the Great Isaiah Scroll. The Hebrew passage from four verses of Isaiah 53 was broken apart into separate glyphs and lettered onto the surface of the canvas, then overpainted and applied again, creating an intriguing palimpsest surface on canvas rather than parchment.

Sandra Bowden is known for her evocative work using ancient Hebrew text. *In the Beginning was the Word*, a collagraph with a collared embossing, uses two texts containing the phrase, *In the Beginning Was the Word*. The inside panel of Hebrew from Genesis 1 and the outer ring from John 1 create a visual dialogue between Moses and John.

Several artists have used collage as a way to employ the text. *Unnameable Name Forming Device* by David Kamm is stunning example of the intricate and laborious work of gluing hundreds of match sized snippets and arranging them to form a cross.



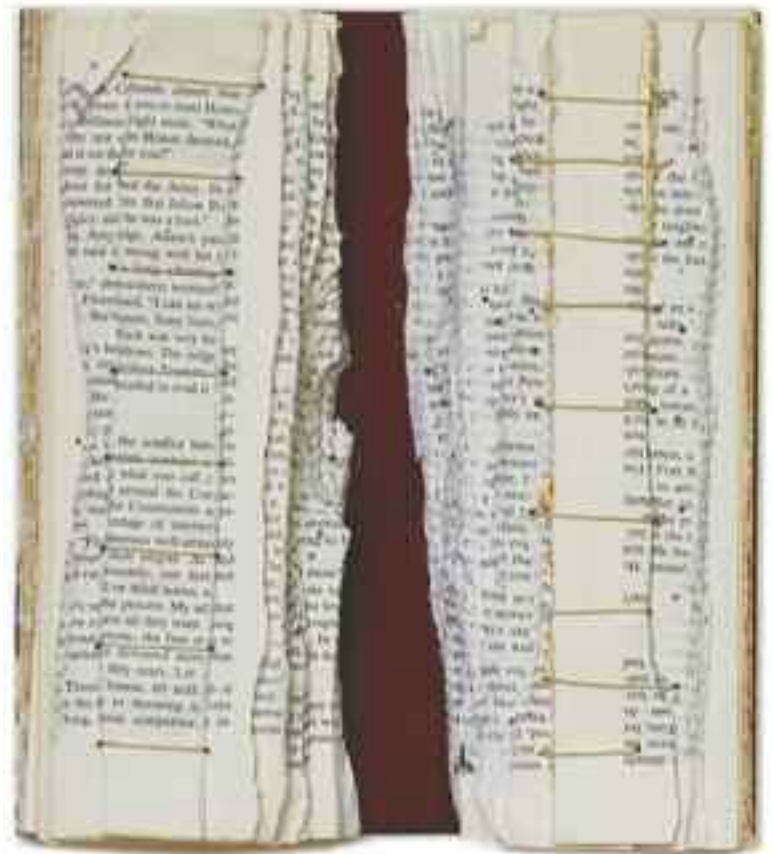


*Sins on the Earth*, by Howard Finster

Sandra Bowden's *In the Beginning* employs fragments of Bible pages, rare Japanese rice papers, and three panels of gilded Hebrew text to form a visual dialogue between the various elements. Although it is not technically a collage, in *Blessed are the Peacemakers*, Sue Coe has juxtaposed the passage from the beatitudes: "blessed are the peacemakers," and the text from the ten commandments: "thou shalt not kill" with images to point out the contrasts in a world with war where — rather than living in harmony and enjoying one another — we bury our young.

Five artists offer the most dramatic works in *Picturing the Bible* by employing the artist's book as a device to share their insights on the Great Book. Adam Back's *Wounded Word*, takes on the ever-growing attack on Christianity in a secular world — an assault against the Bible itself. He has literally ripped the Bible in two exposing its shredded layers, and then attached the two segments to a blood red surface with a fine cord. *The Word Became Text* created by Andrew Barchus is an open and empty handmade book sitting atop a pile of rough stones to focus on how God chose the written word as a way to communicate with his people through the ages — a remarkable and incomprehensible gift. Martha Chatelain's *Open Book V* uses an assortment of handmade papers to create a three-dimensional paper cross in the center. Using the

actual cover of a 1920s devotional book with one-minute prayers, Guy Chase's *God's Minute*, has added a geometric pattern on the back cover that pulls the viewer into its center, reminding us that prayer helps us focus and center on God. Sandra Bowden's *Prayers of the People* is another example of using the book itself as the surface upon which to add biblical text. A collagraph print with a Hebrew passage has been gilded and radiates the light of the Word.



*The Wounded Word*, by Adam Back

## SOLA SCRIPTURA

**S**ola Scriptura: Biblical Art and Text offers the viewer an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable treasure that God has given us—the gift of the Bible. In His wisdom God chose to communicate with those whom he loves through the written word. This system is simply an assortment of markings that have been assigned sounds, clustered together to make a word, and then arranged in sentences, paragraphs and books. Through the written word we are able to comprehend the mind of another person across time and place, and to ultimately share in the mind of God. As the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation is being celebrated across the world, it is important that we recall how Martin Luther brought the Scripture, *Sola Scriptura*, to the forefront as a way to center our personal and communal lives more fully on Christ ■



*The Word Became Text*, by Andrew Barchus



*Bowden Collections offers a total of fourteen traveling exhibitions for rental to museums, churches, colleges, seminaries and similar institutions. Everything needed to mount the exhibition is included in a digital folder containing files for labels, shipping information, lists of items in the show, a brochure in PDF format, along with high resolution digital files of the art in the exhibit. Venues are responsible for the rental fee and shipping, usually to the following location.*

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