

# Durham Bible Museum News



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## 200 YEARS OF THE ABS

May 8, 2016, the American Bible Society (ABS) marked its 200th anniversary. The Society grew up with the United States and throughout its 200 year history has played an important role in Bible distribution and translation. In many ways the ABS patterned its activities after the British and Foreign Bible Society, organized in 1804. A number of local Bible societies had formed in the United States, beginning with the Bible Society of Philadelphia in 1808.

*Elias Boudinot had held numerous government positions, including President of Congress and Director of the U.S. Mint, but he considered his election as the 1st President of the American Bible Society as his highest honor.*



In 1816, Elias Boudinot called for a general meeting in New York of representatives from local Bible Societies. James Fennimore Cooper, the novelist, was among the approximately 60 attendees. The American Bible Society was founded on May 8, 1816, with the sole object "to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment." Elias Boudinot was elected the first President.

Boudinot was descended from French Huguenots who came to America in the 17th century. Born in Philadelphia, he was a neighbor and friend of Benjamin Franklin. Baptized by evangelist George Whitefield during the Great Awakening, Boudinot's faith in Christ was central to his life. He became a lawyer in New Jersey and was involved in civic affairs throughout his life. He was a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, where he served as President and signed the Peace Treaty ending the American Revolution. With the adoption of the Constitution, Boudinot served three terms in the U.S. Congress from New Jersey. George Washington then appointed him Director of the U.S. Mint, where he served from 1795 to 1805. Boudinot resisted the

ideas of the Enlightenment and Deism, and wrote *Age of Revelation* as a reply to Paine's *Age of Reason*. Yet, with all his accomplishments, Boudinot considered his election as President of the American Bible Society as his highest honor; he donated \$10,000 (no mean sum in 1816!) to help establish the Society.

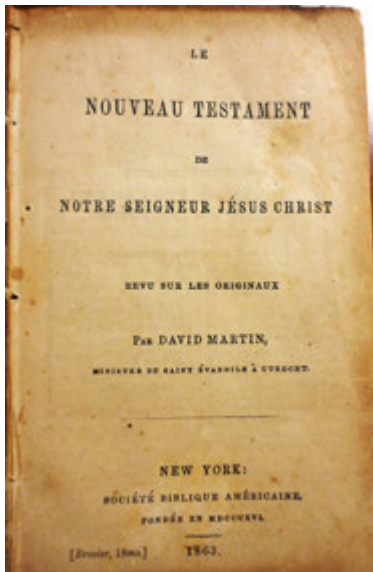
The American Bible Society was one of the first religious non-profit organizations in the United States. It was an outgrowth of the Second Great Awakening, the spiritual revival that transformed much of American society in the first half of the nineteenth century. Many notable Americans were part of the Society's early years. John Jay, first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Treaty of Paris, became President of the ABS after Boudinot. Francis Scott Key, author of the *The Star Spangled Banner*, was Vice-President from 1817 to 1843.



*In 1852, the American Bible Society built its offices, known as the Bible House, in New York City. In 2014, ABS sold that property and in 2015 moved its main offices to Philadelphia, near Independence Hall.*

The new printing technique of using stereotyped plates facilitated the mass production of Bibles in the early years of the ABS. Rather than individually type setting each page, a metal plate of an entire page was made, which could be repeatedly used, even moved around to printers at different locations. The Bible Society of Philadelphia had first imported a set of stereotyped Bible plates in 1812, and in its first constitution, the ABS had the goal of mass producing

*Cont.*



*This 1863 French Bible is one of 200 Bibles published by the American Bible Society in the Dunham's collection. It was given to Claude Clerc during the Civil War by Chaplain William Allington of the 94th Ohio.*

Bibles from such plates. It rapidly acquired plates for printing Bibles not only in English, but in French, German, Gaelic, and Spanish.

The ABS distributed copies of Bibles in prisons, to seamen and boatmen (such as workers on the Erie Canal), and Sunday Schools. European immigrants were given Bibles in their native languages when they arrived in America, and sometimes even at the port of embarkation. The Bible was foundational to the American republic, and it was important that every American know the Scriptures.

Four times in its history, in 1829, 1856, 1866, and 1882, the ABS sought to ensure every family in America had a Bible, sending out representatives to visit every village and farm. In 1890, they sought to make certain every child under fifteen who could read had a Bible.

In 1817, the ABS provided 654 Bibles to sailors on the *U.S.S. John Adams*, and since then has provided nearly 60 million free Bibles and resources to military members and their families. During the Civil War, the ABS supplied Bibles for both North and South. 7,420,910 Bibles were distributed to soldiers during World Wars I and II, and with the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the ABS made a commitment of \$23.5 million to provide Bibles to the former Communist countries.

The ABS also issued Bibles translated into the various Native American languages as well as helped finance William Carey's translation work in India. Working closely with the influential American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the ABS helped finance or provided Bibles throughout the world. The ABS also published the first Bibles for the visually impaired. At least 200 of the Bibles in the Dunham Bible Museum collection were produced by the American Bible Society.

Eugene Nida, a linguist with the ABS, developed the dynamic-equivalence theory of Bible translation, which

sought to provide a common language version of the Scriptures, avoiding literary and colloquial extremes and focusing on the meaning of the text. Known as Today's English Version, the translation was first published as *Good News for Modern Man* in the 1960's.

The ABS has a strong presence in our digital age, having apps which enhance Bible study and Bible reading and supporting the Digital Bible ([digitalbible.org](http://digitalbible.org)) which has the Scriptures in over 1000 languages. With its main offices now located near Independence Hall, the ABS is planning on opening a Faith and Liberty Discovery Center in 2018, focusing on the biblical heritage of our country. 200 years after its founding, the American Bible Society's aim continues: "that all men and women may read and hear the saving word of God and find life in Jesus Christ."

*From Elias Boudinot's letter accepting the presidency of the American Bible Society:*

*I am so convinced that the whole of this business is the work of God himself, by his Holy Spirit, that even hoping against hope I am encouraged to press on through good report and evil report, to accomplish his will on earth as it is in heaven. So apparent is the hand of God in this disposing the hearts of so many men, so diversified in their sentiments as to religious matters of minor importance [i.e. of many different denominations] and uniting them as a band of brothers in this grand object that even infidels are compelled to say; 'It is the work of the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes!' Having this confidence, let us go on and we shall prosper.*



# ST. JOHN'S BIBLE

## Volume 1: the Pentateuch

Through the generous donations of numerous individuals, the Dunham Bible Museum was able to purchase volume 1: the Pentateuch of *The St. John's Bible*, Heritage Edition. This will join the volumes of the Gospels and Acts and the Epistles and Revelation purchased previously.

The Heritage Edition is a fine art reproduction of the original manuscript *Saint John's Bible*. Only 299 Heritage Editions were printed, and each of the volumes is authenticated by Donald Jackson, the renowned calligrapher who oversaw the creation of *The St. John's Bible*. The paper of the Heritage Edition is archival quality, hand-made of 100% cotton, and the inks are fade-resistant. Gold and silver foil was applied to the illuminations. The cover for each volume is hand-crafted leather with a silver clasp.

With three volumes now in the Dunham's collection, funds continue to be sought to purchase the remaining four Old Testament volumes, at the cost of \$20,000 per volume. Donations in any amount are welcome. Some donors may wish to donate an entire volume in honor or memory of a special person. All donations are tax-deductible.



*The opening page of Genesis in volume 1 of the St. John's Bible beautifully depicts the seven days of creation week.*

*Photo courtesy of Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2014*

## Looking for a Special Gift?

The Dunham Bible Museum can be your source for special gifts this holiday season. The Museum has a limited number of Bible leaves and prints from early Bibles which are suitable for framing:

- Quarto leaf from pre-1650 KJV Bible (\$50).
- Quarto leaf from a 1610 Geneva Bible (\$50).
- Folio Bible leaf from an original 1611 KJV Bible (\$190).
- Folio leaf from a pre-1650 KJV Bible (\$100; already framed - \$150.)

Understandably, the Scriptures available in these leaves are limited.

A nice selection of engraved illustrations from 19th century Bibles are also suitable for framing. Black and white engravings are \$10 each; colored are \$25; colored framed are \$50.

In addition, the Museum has facsimiles of the Wycliffe English Bible. These facsimiles were prepared by Dr. Donald Brake from a Wycliffite manuscript in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This facsimile is available in blue buckram for \$50. A limited edition, numbered facsimile in a maroon buckram binding with gilded edges and on off-white, handmade W.S. Vellum acid-free paper and in a matching slip case is available for \$75.

*We look forward to you shopping with us!*

## DONATIONS RECEIVED

*“Thank you”*

to our donors for the following donations recently received:

- **Edward J. Hurwitz** - Johann Christoph Beer's *Des in Jesum Verliebten Frauen-zimmers Scmertzliche Sunden Bereuung*. Nurenberg, 1688.
- **Megumi Ohtani Kurusu** - Japanese New Testament.
- **Peggi Klubnik** - an 1853 *Holy Bible* with notes by Adam Clarke.
- **Kathy Quayle** - *The Bible Cookbook: Faith and Food*.
- **Memorial Drive United Methodist Church** - an 1846 Harper and Brothers *Illuminated Bible Containing Old and New Testaments*.
- **LaVonne Stiffler** - Hezekiah's Tunnel inscription facsimile.

We are pleased to be the new home of these items.





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## Visits our website at [hbu.edu/biblemuseum](http://hbu.edu/biblemuseum)

The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts.

– John Jay  
Founding Father  
1st Supreme Court Chief Justice  
and 2nd President of the American  
Bible Society

### SPECIAL EXHIBIT

*Renaissance of the Bible: 500th Anniversary of Erasmus' Greek text, the Foundation for Reformation*  
Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the printing of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, throughout 2016.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, April 20, 2017 - 6:30 p.m.**

“The Bible in the Reformation,”  
a 2-part lecture by Matthew Barrett, author of *God's Word Alone*, editor of *Credo* magazine, and professor at Oak Hill Theological college, London.  
6:30p.m. - Belin Chapel.

**Tuesday, October 31, 2017 - 6:30 p.m.**

“The Bible, Luther, and the Reformation,” a 2-part lecture by Dr. Paul Maier, professor emeritus of Western Michigan University and a leading Lutheran scholar.

**The Dunham Bible Museum is  
OPEN  
10-4 Monday – Saturdays,  
except University Holidays.**

To make an appointment for group tours, or  
for further information, contact  
**Dr. Diana Severance at  
281-649-3287 or [dseverance@hbu.edu](mailto:dseverance@hbu.edu)**

