

Dunham Bible Museum News



Houston Baptist University

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HBU Acquires the Brake and Hellstern Collections

When the Dunham Bible Museum opened its doors in the Morris Cultural Arts Center in 2008, its expanded exhibits featured many early Bibles and manuscripts from the collections of Dr. Donald Brake and Dr. John Hellstern. Last year HBU was able to purchase a large portion of their collections, with Drs. Brake and Hellstern donating numerous other volumes. The collections include papyri, manuscript Bibles, incunabula, early European and later printed versions of the Bible and biblical commentaries from around the world. The purchase was made possible in large part through a generous donation by Archie and Linda Dunham.



DONALD BRAKE AND JOHN HELLSTERN

Dr. Brake recently retired as Dean of Multnomah Seminary, having earlier served as a missionary in Ethiopia and a seminary professor. Dr. Hellstern is a retired Air Force chaplain. Drs. Brake and Hellstern have spent 30 years collecting rare Bibles and sharing a dream of one day establishing a National Bible Museum. In 1992, the two founded the Living Word National Bible Museum as a 501 (c) (3) corporation and combined their collections for exhibit. For several years they had major exhibits in Dallas, Branson, Missouri and Tulsa, Oklahoma. The displays of the ancient texts of Scripture had a spiritual effect on people viewing the exhibits; Hellstern notes that "it is the text made visible that is a vital flame of the Spirit." He believes that "there is a hunger for this assurance of the accuracy of our Scriptures, when there are so many challenges to the truth of our faith" in the present day. "The witness to the general public of the early text and its centuries of accurate transmission has an important role to play on the stage of our current history," he added.



Donald Brake and John Hellstern

Brake and Hellstern never built the National Bible Museum they had once envisioned, but they are delighted to have their collections now part of the Dunham Bible Museum at HBU. From President Sloan's and HBU's commitment to Christian education, Brake and Hellstern know that their valuable collection will be used

as a spiritual witness to the truth and power of the Scriptures. Hellstern recalled that David desired to build the temple, but was prevented by God from doing so; the job was left to his son Solomon. David couldn't accomplish his dream, but he

assembled all the materials necessary to build the temple. So, HBU is able to build an outstanding Bible Museum and research library with the materials Brake and Hellstern have assembled.

In 2008 Donald Brake published *A Visual History of the English Bible*, which traces the transmission of the Bible "from the pulpit to the people" and is beautifully illustrated with photos from Brake's collection, now at HBU. Baker Academic Books is also publishing Brake's *A Visual History of the King James Bible*, which will be out in time for the 400th anniversary of that book in 2011.

Brake and Hellstern are convinced that with their collections at HBU, "Students' lives are going to be touched as they see the witness of the early texts along with the witness of the lives of those who preserved and passed them on to us." In the coming years, they trust many visitors

will also respond with renewed faith and commitment to the truth and power in God's Word as they see and experience the Bible Museum at Houston Baptist University.

Fragment of Early Bible Text Identified

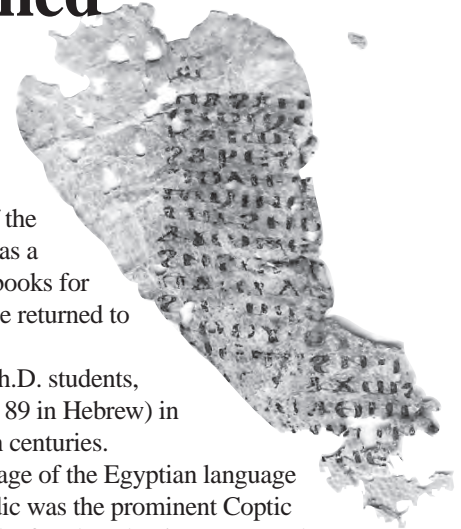
Among the items in Donald Brake's Bible collection, recently acquired by HBU, is a small collection of papyrus fragments, with one fragment on vellum. The fragments came from Egypt, most likely from the Al-Fayyum region. When he purchased the fragments, Brake was especially hopeful that the vellum piece might be a fragment of Scripture.

When Dr. Peter Williams visited the Dunham Bible Museum for his lecture on "The Morality of the Old Testament," he was most interested in the fragments, especially the vellum piece. It obviously was a leaf from a small codex, or early book. Historians recognize that the Christians were the first to use books for their Scriptures, rather than scrolls. Williams took digital scans of all the fragments with him when he returned to Cambridge.

Christian Askeland, a specialist in Coptic versions of the New Testament and one of Williams' Ph.D. students, quickly identified the vellum fragment as part of a miniature codex containing Psalm 88:31-5 (Psalm 89 in Hebrew) in Sahidic Coptic. Though the date is uncertain, the fragment probably dates between the third and fifth centuries.

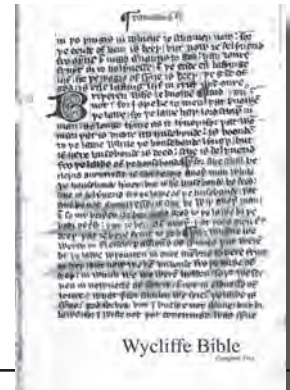
The Bible was being translated into Coptic as early as the second century. Coptic was the last stage of the Egyptian language and used a form of Greek alphabet. Coptic was spoken in Egypt until the seventeenth century. Sahidic was the prominent Coptic dialect before the Islamic conquest. Though the word Copt originally referred to Egyptians in general, after the Islamic conquest, the term came to refer specifically to Egyptian Christians, a minority in Egypt who often suffer persecution today.

Now that the vellum fragment has been identified, Donald Brake speculates that the vellum fragment might have originated in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, where many biblical vellum manuscripts have been found. He is eager to learn what the papyrus fragments in the collection might contain.



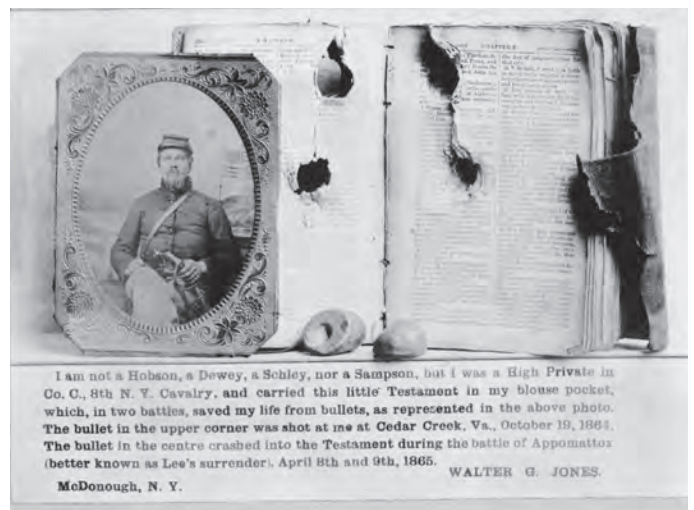
New Printing of Wycliffe Bible available

The Dunham Bible Museum's leaf of Romans 6 from a 15th century manuscript of a *Wycliffite Bible* provides the cover art for a new printing of the first complete English Bible translation. John Wycliffe (c.1320-1384) and his supporters translated from the Latin Vulgate. This new printing of the *Wycliffe Bible* retains the medieval spelling, but is in Roman type and has verse divisions for easier reading and reference. Though English has changed significantly in the 700 years since the translation, the translation is still recognizably English. This new printing of the *Wycliffe Bible* is available in the Bible Museum's gift shop for \$15.



SPECIAL EXHIBIT THROUGH MAY: They Read the Same Bible

"They Read the Same Bible," a special exhibit of Bibles from the Civil War, will be at the Dunham Bible Museum through May 31. The exhibit's title is taken from Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. As Lincoln pondered the larger meaning of the war, he could not escape the fact that on both sides in the war were Christians who read the same Bible and prayed to the same God. Soldiers actually spent more time in camp than on the battlefield, and soldiers' letters often mention Bible reading as part of their daily routine. The Dunham Bible Museum's exhibit includes a rare copy of the New Testament printed by the Confederate Bible Society (only 11 copies are known to remain) as well as a Bible which was part of a shipment of Bibles on the *Minna*, a blockade runner captured in 1863. Soldiers on both sides, routinely facing death, disease, and difficulty, turned to their Bibles as a source of wisdom, courage, and strength. "They Read the Same Bible" is a reminder that, as one letter in the exhibit states, only the gospel of Jesus Christ could heal the nation's wounds.



Walter Jones' New Testament saved him during the battles at Cedar Creek and Appomattox.

Photo from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

A Bible with a *Courtly Connection*



Among the Bibles in the collection recently acquired from Donald Brake is a 1577 Geneva Bible which belonged to Sir Richard Knightley (1533-1615) and his wife Elizabeth. Elizabeth's father, Edward Seymour, was the brother-in-law of Henry VIII and protector of his successor, Edward Seymour's nephew, Edward VI.

Emily Brown, a history major at HBU, was writing her senior honors thesis on contributors to the English Reformation when the Knightley Bible entered the Dunham Bible Museum's collection. She was delighted to read a Bible which actually belonged to a member of the Seymour family, one of the leading Protestant families in England. Even more exciting was reading Elizabeth's handwritten notes, in beautiful penmanship, on Christian doctrine and of prayers to be said reading the Scripture. Miss Brown was able to cite these inscriptions in her thesis as evidence that the Seymours were supporters of the Reformation in England.



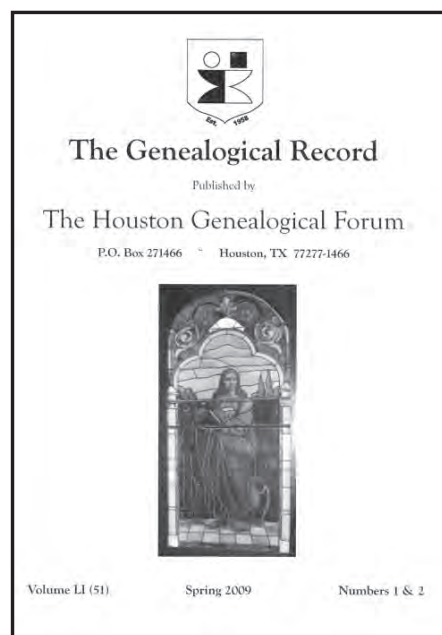
Elizabeth carefully recorded the births of each of her children. One especially interesting record on the birth of one of Elizabeth's sons read (remembering that spelling had not been standardized and some letters were used differently in the 16th century): "My sonne Robert was borne at Norton the xv of September, being Saturday, betuyn xii and one of the cloke of nyght, 1588 her Majesty and lord tresaser, and the erle of Burmond being witnesses." Barely a month after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Queen Elizabeth (her Majesty) and her most trusted advisor, Lord Burleigh (the Lord High Treasurer and Secretary of State) in the middle of the night were witnessing the birth of Elizabeth S. Knightley's son Robert!

Houston Genealogical Forum Publishing Family Record Transcriptions

The most recent issue of *The Genealogical Record*, published by The Houston Genealogical Forum, features the first of a series of transcriptions of family records from American Bibles in the Dunham Bible Museum. Background descriptions of the Bibles, photos of the inscribed pages, and transcriptions of the inscriptions provide important information for genealogists.

Publishing the transcriptions is an important phase in a project begun in 2004. Gloria Wright Russell, then president of The Houston Genealogical Forum undertook the project of photographing and transcribing the pages of Bibles from the Museum's collections which had family records recorded on them. Russell and over twenty dedicated members of The Houston Genealogical Forum have spent long hours compiling the records from nearly 100 Bibles. The ultimate goal is to make the digital files of the Bible records and their transcriptions available on the Internet for the use of genealogists and researchers. The Dunham Bible Museum is deeply grateful for the accurate and pains-taking work of Mrs. Russell and her dedicated genealogists.

It seems people began writing the births, marriages, and deaths of their family members in Bibles from the earliest days of printed personal Bibles. When the Bible was the only book a family might own, and paper was relatively rare, the Bible was the best place to keep such important information. The first pages printed specifically for family records in Bibles was in the 1802 quarto Bible published by Philadelphia printer Matthew Carey. Carey placed pages between the Old and New Testaments for the recording of births, marriages, and deaths.. The last words of the Old Testament were Malachi's prophecy that God would "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." The first words of the New Testament were Matthew's genealogy of Jesus Christ. By placing the Family Record Pages between Malachi's prophecy about fathers and children and Jesus' own genealogy, each family's history became in one sense part of the Bible's story.





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Visit our website at

www.hbu.edu/biblemuseum

“The Holy Scripture is to me,
and always will be, the constant guide
of my assent; and I will always hearken
to it, as containing the infallible truth
relating to things of highest concernment.”

~ John Locke



Groups young and old enjoy touring the Museum. The NW Light Home School Group especially enjoyed visiting the Museum this fall.

VISITING THE MUSEUM

The Dunham Bible Museum is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday – Saturdays, except University Holidays. To make an appointment at other times, for group tours, or for further information, contact Dr. Diana Severance at 281-649-3287 or dseverance@hbu.edu.

2009-200 Dunham Bible Museum Lectures now available online!

The lectures include:

- “How the English Bible Shaped American Culture,” by Daniel Dreisbach
- “Johann Sebastian Bach: His Bible and His Music,” by Tom Rossin
- “The Bible as a Literary classic,” by Leland Ryken
- “The Bible and Higher Education,” by David Jeffrey

Visit the Museum’s website www.hbu.edu/bible_museum and click “Events - Videos of Previous Lectures.”



“Moral Objections to the Old Testament”
by Peter Williams will be available on
DVD in the Gift Shop.