Manifold Greatness:
The King James Bible According to Claremont

For more information on Manifold Greatness related events in Claremont:  www.cgu.edu/manifold

Manifold Greatness website:   www.manifoldgreatness.org

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Title page of *The Holy Bible, conteyning the Old Testament, and the New: newly translated out of the originall tongues: & with the former translations diligently compared and reuised, by His Maiesties speciall comandement.* London: Robert Barker, 1611. Special Collections, Honnold/Mudd Library, BS 170 1611a

Manifold Greatness:  The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible, a traveling exhibition for libraries organized by the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., and the American Library Association Public Programs Office. It is based on an exhibition of the same name developed by the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, with assistance from the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas, to mark the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible. The traveling exhibition, here on view in the Claremont Colleges Library, was made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
First published in 1611, the creation of a team of more than 40 translators commissioned by King James I of England, the "King James" version of the Bible, or KJV, has long been considered, with the works of William Shakespeare, as the finest expression of a golden age of letters. Its influence on the English-speaking world is incomparable. It currently ranks as the most printed, most sold, and most stolen book in the history of publishing, and its imprint on elite and popular culture alike is indelible.

This historically British book, however, made its greatest impact on the minds and souls of Americans. Declarations of independence notwithstanding, the United States has never severed the heartstrings that connect it to the KJV. American music, political rhetoric, vernacular speech, fine arts, and every genre of literature have carried its cadences into the twenty-first century. Other versions of the English language Bible now also flourish in the teeming U.S. marketplace, but the very fact of their existence bears witness to the KJV's enduring popularity, both spiritual and secular.

And the King James Bible holds a special place here: in the collections of this university library; in the training of its graduate scholars in Religion, History, Literature, and Cultural Studies; and in the interests of the many publics we also serve. From our first edition copy of the 1611 Bible that started it all, through scriptural testaments to the perilous trek westward, and on to remarkable expressions of fine art and popular culture, this is the King James Bible according to Claremont.

Translations

A long history of biblical translation informed the KJV; from the Hebrew Bible to the Septuagint to the Vulgate, some representatives of that history are on view here.

'srim v'r h s, sive, Biblia Hebraica [edited by Io. Heinr. Michaelis]. Halae Magdeburgicae [i.e. Halle] Typis & sumptibus Orphanotrophei, 1720. Special Collections, Honnold/Mudd Library


Biblia, ad Vetustissimam Exemplarium. Venice: Damianum Xerarum, [1599]. Special Collections, Honnold/Mudd Library


The Holy Bible, containing the Old Testament, and the New, newly translated out of the original tongues & with the former translations diligently compared and revised, by His Majesties speciall commandment. Appointed to be read in churches. London: Robert Barker, 1611. Special Collections, Honnold/Mudd Library


Westward ho!

Amongst their few possessions, travelers moving westward brought with them their family bibles from which they drew strength during hardship and in which they recorded their family histories.

The Bible that is, The Holy Scriptures conteined in the Olde and Newe Testament, translated according to the Ebreev and Greeke, [The Geneva Bible]. London: Christopher Barker, 1599. Special Collections, Honnold/Mudd Library

The Four Gospels of the Lord Jesus Christ According to the Authorized Version of King James I. With decorations by Eric Gill. [Waltham Saint Lawrence, Berkshire]: Golden Cockerel Press, 1931. Batten Collection, Denison Library, Scripps College


The English Bibles Containing the Old Testament and the New translated out of the original tongues by special command of His Majesty King James the First… Hammersmith: Dores Press, 1903-05. Facsimile of the first page, volume 1. On loan, Professor Lori Anne Ferrell, Claremont Graduate University

Herman Melville, After the Pleasure Party. Claremont: The First-Floor Press, 2010. On loan, Professor Jeff Groves, Harvey Mudd College

Loose Type Pieces of Different Sizes; Type Pieces in a Composing Stick; Copper Plate of Text. First-Floor Press Collection

KJV and the Book Arts

The KJV – a diverse collection of sacred texts captured in the distinctive language of the golden age of English letters and the most interactive book in the history of the modern English speaking world – remains an inexhaustible source for fine printers.


Milton & Paradise Lost

Inspired by the KJV, in Paradise Lost Milton undertook an imaginative, poetic re-creation of the Genesis account of the Creation and of Adam and Eve, culminating in the drama of their temptation, fall, and expulsion from Eden.


