

The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

STATION 3: 13th Century Manuscript Bible

Plus Important Printed "Septuagint"



13TH CENTURY MANUSCRIPT BIBLE



***Click on the image
above to see an
enlarged view!***

Written on over 360 sheets of vellum (prepared sheepskin) in a hand that resembles modern cursive script, with rubricated initial letters for each chapter and further ink decorations, including an occasional illuminated letter for the beginning of a book. Such Bibles were the products of monastic ***scriptoria***, which copied important books (chief among these being the Bible) by direct copying from the original, or by having the book dictated to more than one scribe at a time.

This Bible is almost identical to a similar volume in the University of Indiana Library (one of their greatest treasures); they may have come from the same monastic work room. The text is that of the **Latin Vulgate** version, attributed to St. Jerome, the "official" text in the language of learning at that time. Because of the variance of the Latin text by region (as the medieval church made accretions or deletions to support doctrine), such manuscripts show which "family" of texts they belonged to (and thus the area of origin).

In 1290, the scholars at the University of Paris determined to produce a uniform, accurate Vulgate version; the "final" Vulgate text was not completed until the Council of Trent acted in the closing years of the 16th century. Imagine that this book may have taken nearly a year to write, and may have required the skins of a whole flock of sheep for its production.

Other important manuscripts, some of them very ancient, are shown as part of the Dr. Gene Scott Collection; ancient papyrus and vellum manuscripts are shown in the "Room of the Book" at [Station 52](#), an 8th century Coptic palimpsest leaf is at [Station 39](#) and the great uncial codices of the 4th & 5th centuries are shown at [Station 48](#). Reproductions and original

manuscripts of great beauty and importance are also shown at or near [Station 37](#).

THE GREEK SEPTUAGINT & ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS



The Greek version of the Old Testament used in Christ's time was the **Septuagint**; this word is a contraction for the Latin "**Secundum Septuaginta Interpretes**" ("According to the 70 Interpreters") and is generally designated **LXX**. The **Codex Vaticanus** has a subscription at Genesis, "According to the Seventy," while the **Codex Alexandrinus** has "The Edition of the Seventy" before Isaiah. Legend has it that King Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.) at Alexandria, Egypt, was attempting to form a collection of all the books known in the world. His librarian, Demetrius Phalerus, advised him that the library was lacking the "Law of the Jews." Philadelphus wrote to the High Priest of Jerusalem, Eleazar, asking for 72 scholars (6 learned elders from each tribe) to come and prepare a Greek translation for him.

It is said the scholars worked in secluded quarters by the sea for 72 days; a variant version states that the translators worked independently in 72 (or 36) cells, for 72 (or 36) days, and when the individual translations were compared, there were no variations found. The legend was first based on the so-called "Letter of Aristeus," who pretended to be one of the officers sent by Philadelphus to Jerusalem. The original Septuagint was limited to the Pentateuch; some scholars reserve the term "Septuagint" for only these first five books of the Old Testament. The complete Greek Old Testament was likely the product of many translators from the mid-3rd century to as late as 50 B.C.

The Septuagint was quoted and obviously much circulated (usually as separate Books) in the centuries before and after the time of Christ, but the oldest extant complete manuscripts of it are the **Alexandrinus**, **Sinaiticus** and the **Vaticanus**, uncial codices dating from the 4th and early 5th centuries. These all vary from each other in places. Aside from these, there are some 2,000 other extant early manuscripts (also varying from each other and the Uncials) of single books or sections of the LXX. The Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran contain fragments from the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. A papyrus containing 20 verses from Deuteronomy (Rahlfs #957) dates from the early 2nd century B.C. while another papyrus from the late 2nd century B.C. contains Leviticus 26:2-16 (Rahlfs #801). The Chester Beatty Papyri (2nd or early 3rd century A.D.) contain Numbers and Deuteronomy. Early versions also exist in other ancient languages: Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic and Old Latin.

The first printed Greek Septuagint was included in the Complutensian Polyglot prepared under the direction of Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros of Alcala, Spain in 1514-1517, from various manuscripts including some from the Vatican Libraries, but it was not published until after the second Greek Septuagint, included in the Aldine Greek Bible of 1518, shown at [Station 4](#). The Complutensian text was the basis of the Septuagint Greek of the polyglots of Antwerp (1569-72), Heidelberg (1586-7), Hamburg (1596) and Paris (1643), while the text of the Aldine edition was derived from fewer sources. The third -and most influential - published Septuagint was prepared under the auspices of Pope Sixtus V in 1587. Based primarily on the **Codex Vaticanus** (and thus cementing the association between the Septuagint and the **Vaticanus** text), it is referred to as the "Sixtina Romana" edition. The fourth important edition was published in England in 1707-20. Based on the Alexandrinus, it was produced by John Grabe at Oxford, completed after his death by his assistant.

THE GREEK SEPTUAGINT

Breitinger's 1730 Masterwork

By the end of the 17th century, scholars knew that many ancient manuscripts existed of the Septuagint, varying from each other and from the **Textus Receptus** (the generally accepted Greek version of the complete Bible). Among others, the **Alexandrinus** had been presented to Charles I of England in 1628; the **Vaticanus** had been catalogued in the Vatican Library since 1475. Thus, a scholarly edition of the Septuagint could finally be produced that would compare the various versions with each other and document where they varied from the **Textus Receptus**, in the hopes of

producing a text closer to the original.



One of the most comprehensive attempts to do this was the four-volume set printed in Basle, Switzerland by Johann Heidegger in 1730. Its foundation was based on the previous scholarship of John Grabe of Oxford, who had transcribed the **Alexandrinus** in 1707-20. This new scholarly edition of the Septuagint was the masterwork of its editor, Johann Jacob Breitinger, who added variant readings from the **Vaticanus** and other manuscripts, and compared them to the "Received Text." Until modern editions appeared in the 19th century, this set was indispensable for Bible scholars. Breitinger attempted to simply present the most likely text of the Septuagint carefully transcribed into Greek with the proper punctuation and spellings.

The first leaves of the **Sinaiticus** were not discovered until a century later than the publication of this masterwork; definitive publications of the complete texts of the **Alexandrinus** and the **Vaticanus** were not done until even later. The printed editions of these three great uncial codices are shown at [Station 48](#). So for many decades, Breitinger's masterwork served scholars of every creed as a source reflecting the oldest versions of the Septuagint (and thus the Old Testament Bible) extant. Breitinger was careful to point out which Books were included in which manuscripts, and each page is heavy with notes giving alternate readings from the "Received Text" or sometimes from other manuscripts from the Vatican Library. Presented here are the complete four-volume set and a volume which combines the original volumes I and II, all with introductions, explanations and head notes throughout in Latin.



STATION LOCATION MAP

Below is a floor plan map of the Cathedral in 3 sections, one for each level. The first section is the Lower Level, the second is the Foyer Level, and the third is the Mezzanine Level. This station is located in the "Room of the Book" on the Lower Level at the red #3.



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