The Winchester Bible
Conservation
The Winchester Bible

The Winchester Bible is one of the largest and finest bibles ever made in England. It is of huge significance in the history of Christianity and in the history of the development of the book. Believed to have been commissioned in 1160 by Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester and grandson of William the Conqueror, it is thought to have been crafted in the Cathedral.

The Bible is made from the skins of 250 calves. The parchment was lined using a special metal tool and just one scribe wrote most of the Latin text. Each page would have taken a day to write and there were 1000 pages in total. Once the scribe had written the text, professional artists drew and illuminated the initials at the beginning of each book of the Bible. 46 of the major initials in the Bible are complete and fully illuminated. Many others were left unfinished, giving valuable insights into the making of medieval illuminated manuscripts.

The painstaking process of conserving the first volume of the Bible started early in 2014. It was found that the parchment at the spine-fold had been damaged by the use of hot rabbit skin glue when the manuscript was rebound in the 1820s. An attempt to repair the spine at its last rebinding in 1948 resulted in further damage and cockling of the pages. Through the use of solvents, gentle humidification and patching, this damage has been repaired, as have tears elsewhere in the manuscript.

The dry cleaning of the leaves has yielded astonishing results, changing the tone of the pages from dark grey to creamy white. The flaking gilt and friable pigment of the illuminated initials has been consolidated. A high resolution digital copy has been made of the dis-bound pages, capturing the 12th century editorial notes previously hidden in the margins. These images will help make the Bible accessible to the widest possible audience.
Support the conservation of The Winchester Bible

We need your help to complete the conservation of this stunning medieval masterpiece. The names of all supporters of the Bible conservation will be displayed in a hand-made volume using parchment and authentic binding techniques, mirroring those used on the Bible itself. Donations of $15,000 or more will also be included on the Cathedral’s board of major donors.

HOW YOUR GIFT COULD BE USED TO HELP

$1,500
Could sponsor the cost of the conservation of one of the Bible’s thousand pages.

$6,000
Could sponsor the cost of conserving one bifolium of the Bible.

$15,000
Could fund the cost of digital photography of the pages of one volume of the Bible.

$25,000
Could fund the cost of ‘Turning the Pages Technology’ – creating a virtual copy of the Bible so that students of all kinds can virtually ‘leaf through’ its pages.

$60,000
Could fund the cost of digital photography of the whole Bible.

$150,000
Could contribute to the costs of environmental control in the Bible’s new display.

$250,000
Could fund the cost of conserving, digitizing and re-binding one volume of the Bible.

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A GIFT

I would like to make a gift of $____

I wish to make my gift:

☐ In my own name

☐ On behalf of (please complete)

☐ In memory of (please complete)

☐ I would like my donation to be acknowledged in the Book of Supporters.

YOUR DETAILS

Name _________________________________

Address _________________________________

Zip code _________________________________

Telephone _________________________________

Email _________________________________

Signature _________________________________

Date _________________________________

OUR DETAILS

Please send your donation to:

Matthew Tuck
American Friends of Winchester Cathedral Inc
35 Prospect Park West Apartment 7B
Brooklyn
New York 11215

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For further information, please contact:

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'The Winchester Bible is a prime candidate for the finest surviving work of art produced in medieval England... the work of conservation and exhibition in the 21st century is part of an astonishing and unbroken tradition, in the very building where it was created.'

Dr Christopher de Hamel – Cambridge University