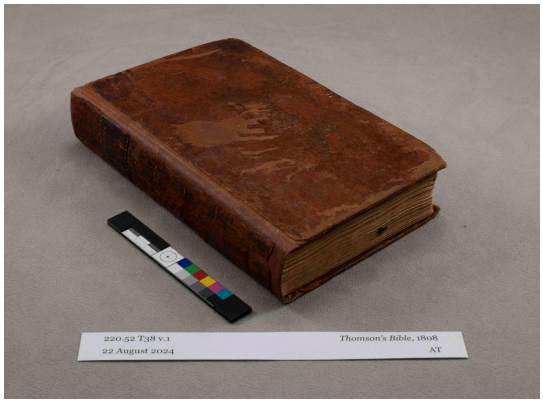
Before Treatment



After Treatment

BOOK CONSERVATION: CONDITION AND TREATMENT REPORT

DATE EXAMINED:	June 18th, 2024
CONSERVATOR:	Brittany Murray, Summer Graduate Intern
SUPERVISED BY:	Renée Wolcott, Assistant Head of Conservation and Book Conservator
AEON TN:	169075
CALL NUMBER:	220.52 T38 v.1
COLLECTION:	Rare Book Vault
AUTHOR/MAKER:	Charles Thomson, translator; Jane Aitken, binder
TITLE/DESCRIPTION:	The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Covenant
PUBLICATION/DATE:	Philadelphia: Jane Aitken, 1808.
BINDING:	The text is a tight back, tight joint, in-boards binding, fully covered in brown sheepskin. The boards are a dense pulp board that have been back cornered. The spine was backed and has a slightly rounded, smooth profile. Five bands of gold tooling divide the spine into six sections, with a red label in the second. "THOMSON'S BIBLE" is tooled on the label in gold letters, framed at the top and bottom by gilt bands. A gilt number "1" is two sections beneath. Evidence of sprinkled edge decoration is present on all sides. The double-folio endsheets are made with wove white paper similar in weight to the rest of the textblock. A stub is visible beneath the pastedown, and there are two flyleaves. The binding is original.
SEWING:	The textblock is sewn on four cord supports using three-on abbreviated sewing. A thin paper spine-lining is visible beneath the leather covering. Natural linen thread was likely used, twisted in the S direction. Sewing was previously repaired with a stick pin in the center of gathering U.

TEXT:	Black letterpress printing ink with graphite, black fountain pen ink, and black stamp ink on white wove paper.
PLATES:	None.
COLLATION:	Title page folio, sixty-three octavo in 4s signatures A – 3R (not including the letters "J", "V", or "W"), folio 3S. There are a total of 256 unnumbered leaves.
IDENTIFYING MARKS:	**Front pastedown:** APS bookplate with call number and "Presented by Mr. and Mrs. Fisher L. Boyd" in black printing ink and black fountain pen ink. "426/3" in graphite at head. **Second flyleaf, recto:** "2156 / Vol 1-2-3 only" in graphite at head; "Am. Philosophical Soc. / Jun 25, 1958 / Philadelphia" stamped in black ink at tail. **Gathering A, page 1, recto:** "1958 1454" in black manuscript ink at top right; "Mr. and Mrs. F. L. Boyd g. 6/1958" vertically in graphite at tail of gutter.
INSERTIONS:	Paper bookmark with call number in black manuscript ink between second flyleaf and first title page; filigreed paper cutout and white thread between gatherings G and H; white thread between leaves 3 and 4 of gathering I; thin blond hair in the center of gathering K; blue thread between gatherings O and P; slip of thin blue thread between gatherings Ee and Ff; white fabric with green pattern between gatherings 3H and 3I; gold metallic thread in the center of gathering 3I.
SIZE (H x W x D):	22.4 x 15 x 4.4 cm.
HOUSING:	The current housing is a four-flap enclosure of acidic 20-pt cardstock.

REASON FOR TREATMENT

Graduate summer intern treatment project. Stabilization for future housing, handling, and exhibition.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Charles Thomson (1729 – 1824) was a Scottish-Irish Presbyterian who emigrated to America in 1739 as a ten-year-old boy. An accomplished scholar, importer, and later politician, Thomson was chosen as the secretary during the formation of the Continental Congress in 1774. He held this office for fifteen years before embarking on his final venture: perfecting the complete translation of the Greek Septuagint. The text included the first English New Testament to be translated and published in America. Thomas intended to issue the work in the quarto format but was persuaded by Thomas Jefferson to publish it in four octavo volumes. The first three volumes are of the Old Testament, while the fourth volume is the New Testament (Grobel 1943).

Jane Aitken printed the Thomson Bible, and consequently became the first American woman to print the entire Bible. Her father, Robert Aitken, was known for printing the first English Bible in America. After inheriting his business in 1808, she printed the four-volume Thomson Bible (Museum of the Bible 2021).

Thomson's translation was not widely used; only a thousand copies were printed, most were never sold, and a majority were destroyed. Thomson's Bible is rare, with the most accessible reprint published by C.A. Muses in 1954, though there were many changes to the text (Ramsey Michaels 2011).

CONDITION

The binding is in poor, unstable condition, and both joints are completely split. The back board is tenuously attached by the bottom cord slip, and the front board became detached during examination. The spine leather is splitting and peeling away from the textblock. Both endcaps are missing, and the red leather spine label has become detached, revealing a powdery white adhesive residue on the spine leather beneath. The cracked, discolored grain layer of the leather is heavily abraded and delaminating in strips, revealing the paler corium layer below. There is active red rot. The pasteboard corners are exposed and are beginning to delaminate. The gilt tooling on the spine is faded, and the numeral "1" is abraded.

The sewing system is in poor, unstable condition. The primary cord supports are brittle, and all four cord slips are broken over the front joint. All but the bottom cord slip are broken over the back joint. The hinges have split, and the front flyleaves are detached, with loose sewing visible in the hinge. Similarly, the first back flyleaf has split from the stub beneath the back pastedown. Broken sewing is present in gatherings U, Ii, Rr, and 3A. The center folios are loose in gatherings U and Ii, and their protruding edges are worn and crumpled. The textblock is mostly intact due to linings and adhesive on the spine of the text, though these have started to fail. There are approximately five splits, between gatherings O and P, T and U, U and X, Hh and Ii, and 3H and 3I. A historic repair is present in gathering U, where a loose thread was wrapped around a pin and inserted into the open station.

The textblock is in fair, stable condition, as is the black printing ink, the primary medium used in the book. Staining, discoloration, and foxing are present throughout. Minor water damage is on the foredge of gatherings X, 3C, and 3K. Heavy staining is present at the head edge in gathering Ll and Mm. Minor creases and tears are present throughout. The outer folio of gathering O has a deckled edge and is approximately 5 mm shorter than the center folio. Similarly, the outer folio of gathering 3K has a deckled edge and is 2 mm shorter than the center folio. Heavy surface grime is present in the gutters of the text, including soot, hair, and a flattened silverfish. The endleaves are in poor condition. The acidic leather turn-ins have caused the edges of the pastedowns to discolor. On the front pastedown, adhesive residue from a previous label or piece of tape above the bookplate has caused the paper to darken.

TREATMENT RATIONALE AND PROPOSAL

Treatment seeks to stabilize volume 1 of the Thomson Bible, as it is in unstable and unusable condition. The binding will be dry cleaned to reduce surface grime before the board corners and leather sides are consolidated.
The original spine leather will be lifted and reserved for possible reattachment. The brittle spine linings and adhesive will be reduced and the textblock cleaned and disbound. Intentional attachments and inclusions will be retained and labeled according to location. Gatherings will be guarded with toned mulberry tissue and a methyl cellulose and wheat starch paste mixture. The textblock will be resewn in the same 3-on abbreviated pattern over cords, using the original sewing stations. The spine will be relined, and the original boards reattached. The spine will be rebacked, and the original leather and spine label will be adhered to the spine as condition permits.

TREATMENT

1. The object was photographed before and after treatment.
2. Insertions were removed and sealed in a mylar sleeve, and labeled according to location.
3. The boards were detached from the textblock, and the covering material was consolidated with 2% Klucel G (hydroxypropyl cellulose) in isopropanol.
4. The textblock was surface cleaned using a soft hake brush and latex-free cosmetic sponges.
5. The spine leather was faced with Hanji 1201 mulberry tissue in preparation for lifting. The lifted spine leather and associated fragments were consolidated again on the flesh side using 2% Klucel G in isopropanol.

6. Leather residue on the spine was mechanically reduced with a microspatula, before a 4% A4M methylcellulose poultice was applied to reduce remaining leather and adhesive residues. The spine was cleaned using this method twice. During this process, the blue and red decoration from the stuck-on endbands could be seen far more clearly, as the intersecting red and blue lines had transferred to the spine of the text block. This may suggest that the original endbands were made from a decorative pastepaper.
7. The original sewing was snipped and pulled, and select threads were retained. The gatherings were separated.
8. Gatherings were guarded using Hanji 1101, a lightweight handmade Korean mulberry paper, toned with Golden Fluid Acrylic paints and set down with a 3:1 wheat starch paste and 4% A4M methyl cellulose mixture. Any tears were mended using the same materials. The two pairs of flyleaves were mended using Golden acrylic toned Hanji 1301, a heavier handmade Korean mulberry paper, and the same adhesive. Each flyleaf was given an extended hinge that could be sewn through, for reintegration into the textblock. A toned strip of Sekishu, a more opaque heavyweight Japanese mulberry paper, was adhered to the extended hinges adjacent to the gutter of the first and last flyleaves with the same adhesive mix, to reduce the visibility of the exposed spine edges of the front and back boards.
9. Sewing stations were punched according to the original three-on abbreviated sewing pattern, and the text block was resewn on two thin (2-ply) linen cords using 2-ply sewing thread.
10. The spine was consolidated with wheat starch paste, and then rounded and backed.
11. A shoulder-to-shoulder lining of Hanji 1201 was adhered to the spine using wheat starch paste, to provide a barrier layer between the original material and new material. An extended lining of Hanji 1201 was applied using the same adhesive, followed by a second extended lining of washed airplane cotton applied with a 1:1 wheat starch paste and Lascaux 498 HV mix. Panel linings of Western paper were added between the sewing supports, set down with the same adhesive mix.
12. New endbands with a cord core were made from Western paper decorated in a similar pattern to the original endbands. Blue and red Golden acrylics were mixed with paste to achieve colors similar to those used in the original endbands and applied with a ruling pen. The decorated paper was wrapped around linen cord consolidated with wheat starch paste, and the endbands were stuck onto the spine using a 1:1 wheat starch paste and Lascaux 498 HV mix.
13. The pastedowns were lifted at the spine edges of the front and back boards, as was the leather covering material. The leather was pared beginning 3mm away from the joint to provide a compensation strip and allow a smooth transition between the original boards and the new covering material.
14. The exposed pasteboard was consolidated with wheat starch paste and allowed to dry. The cord slips were fed through slits in the shoulders of the extended spine linings and frayed out. The boards were aligned with the text block, and the book was placed in a finishing press. The frayed-out cord slips were adhered to the boards beneath the lifted leather with Lascaux 498 HV.
15. A western paper spine inlay was tacked to the textblock spine using dots of Lascaux 498 HV, in preparation for rebacking.
16. Hollytex and Hanji 1301 were toned with Golden acrylic paints and laminated using a 1:1 wheat starch paste and Lascaux 498 HV mixture. The laminate structure was toned a sympathetic shade to the existing leather, and used as the covering material for rebacking.
17. The new covering material was set down over the spine inlay and onto the boards beneath the lifted leather with a 1:1 methylcellulose and Lascaux 498 HV mix and allowed to dry. The lifted leather along the spine edges of the boards was set down over the new covering material using the same adhesive mixture. The western paper spine inlay was popped away from the textblock to create a baggy back structure.
18. The mulberry paper and textile spine lining flanges were adhered beneath the pastedowns using Lascaux 498 HV and allowed to dry. The extended hinges of the inner flyleaves were then set down beneath the pastedowns and on top of the dried lining extensions with a 1:1 methylcellulose and Lascaux 498 HV mix, followed by the lifted pastedowns, using the same adhesive. The extended hinges from the outer flyleaves

were set down on top of the pastedowns using a 3:1 wheat starch paste and methylcellulose mix. Tears that formed on the front pastedown during lifting were mended with a strip of toned Hanji 1101 and the same adhesive mixture.

19. Golden acrylic-toned Tengujo (9 gsm) patches were applied to tears and losses in the leather on the boards using a 1:1 methylcellulose and Lascaux 498 HV mix. The patches were toned further with Golden acrylic paints to improve aesthetic integration.
20. Paper fragments from the reverse of the lifted spine leather were mechanically reduced with a microspatula and sandpaper. The leather was lined with the same Golden acrylic-toned Tengujo using a 1:1 methylcellulose and Lascaux 498 HV mix and allowed to dry. The facing tissue was removed with ethanol and the excess Tengujo lining was trimmed. The original spine piece and fragments were adhered to the new covering material using the same adhesive and allowed to dry.

REFERENCES

Grobel, Kendrick. 1943. “Charles Thomson, First American N.T. Translator: An Appraisal.” Journal of Bible and Religion 11, no. 3 (August): 145-151. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1458628.

Museum of the Bible. 2021. “Jane Aitken.” Book Minute, Museum of the Bible. Last modified March 22, 2021. https://www.museumofthebible.org/book-minute/jane-aitken

Ramsey Michaels, J. 2011. “Charles Thomson and the First American New Testament.” The Harvard Theological Review 104, no. 3 (July): 349-365. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41234090