

THE Bible IN America™ MUSEUM

Newsletter

Houston Baptist University

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The Pilgrims' Bible

Eight large paintings in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol depict key events in the early history of America. One of the paintings is "Embarkation of the Pilgrims" by Robert Weir. The Pilgrims are shown kneeling on the deck of their ship in 1620 as they depart for America from Holland. William Brewster holds an open Bible, while Pastor John Robinson leads Governor Carver, William Bradford, Miles Standish, and the Pilgrim families in prayer. The open Bible was the Geneva Bible, favored by the Pilgrims and early Puritans.

The Geneva Bible had its roots in persecution. After Mary Tudor became Queen of England in 1553, she began a program of persecuting those who would not follow the Roman Catholic faith. John Rogers, editor of a revision of William Tyndale's Bible, was burned at Smithfield in London on February 4, 1555, becoming the first of many British Protestants to die during Mary's turbulent rule. Hundreds of English Protestants fled to the continent for safety, many settling in Geneva, Switzerland. Under the leadership of William Farel and John Calvin, Geneva had become an intellectual and spiritual center for European Protestants.

One of the exiles was William Whittingham, a Hebrew and Greek scholar from Oxford. Whittingham and others began a completely revised translation of the English Bible. At the same time back in England, almost three hundred Protestants were executed by "Bloody" Mary. When Mary died in 1558, there was much joy, and many of the Geneva exiles returned to England. The new Bible translation begun in Geneva was published in 1560 and dedicated to the new Queen Elizabeth.

The Geneva Bible was unique in several ways. It was the first English Bible to be printed in Roman letters rather than the heavy Gothic black letter. It was the first English Bible to have numbered verses. It was also the first Bible to use italics for words the translators added because of English idiom, but which were not in the original. The Geneva Bible was designed to be read by ordinary individuals, and it was published in a smaller size (6 1/2" x 9 3/4") and a moderate price. Notes were added to explain difficult passages. For example, the meaning of "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14) was explained as "To serve one another."

Tables and additional study aides were included at the back of the Bible. One was a table of the names used in the Old Testament, with their meanings. The preface encouraged the readers to name



infants with names that would be "advertisements" they were part of God's household. Many Puritans and Pilgrims followed this advice and chose obscure, though meaningful, Hebrew names for their children.

Many phrases used in our Bibles today were first used in the Geneva Bible, such as: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth ..." "Vanity of vanities" (Eccl. 12:1, 8); "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17); "Except a man be born again" (John 5:3); "a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1). (For more phrases coined by Bible translators see "Influence in America's History" at the website: www.hbu.edu/bia.)

Sometimes the Geneva Bible is called "the Breeches Bible" because Genesis 3:7 is translated "and they sewed fig tree leaves together and made themselves breeches." 150 editions of the Geneva Bible were printed between 1560 and 1644, and for three quarters of a century it was the household Bible of a large section of English-speaking Protestants. It was the version used by Shakespeare, John Bunyan, and the version used by the earliest settlers to America. In England and America the Geneva Bible helped form a Christianity which made a permanent impact on Anglo-American culture.



Loretta Thompson photographing family records in Bible collection.



Henry Wenzler and Gloria Russell examine Family Records in Bible.

Family Record Project

by Gloria LaVonne Wright Russell

Over one hundred of the Bibles in the **Bible in America Museum** collection contain family history records of births, marriages, deaths, and personal dates, many dating to the 1600's and 1700's. Members of the Houston Genealogical Forum have taken on the project of making these records available to researchers.

The Houston Genealogical Forum was organized in 1957 in the Historical Room of the Houston Public Library, with the stated purpose: "to create, foster, and maintain interest among citizens of Harris County, Texas, in the Genealogy and Local History of Harris County; the genealogy of the founders of this Republic; and such genealogy as may be of interest to the members." Over the years members of the Forum have copied, indexed, and catalogued numerous records from cemeteries, land records, court records, and other documents.

Gloria Russell, immediate past president of the Houston Genealogical Forum, is currently the HGF Web Curator and serves as Project Chair of the HGF-HBU Bible Transcription Project. The project has been divided into four phases: 1) Digital imaging of all Bible family history pages; 2) transcription of the Bible digital images; 3) comparison of the transcription with actual Bible pages; and 4) finalization of the Bible images and transcriptions, making them available to the genealogical community, including placing them on the **Bible in America Museum** and Houston Genealogical Forum websites. This summer Gloria enlisted Forum members Hank Wenzler and Loretta Thompson to undertake the digital image photographing of the Bible pages. Photographing began in earnest in July and continued through August. All of the Bibles in the collection with family history pages have been photographed. Hank and Loretta are in the process of putting the Bible images on CD's to complete Phase I of the project.



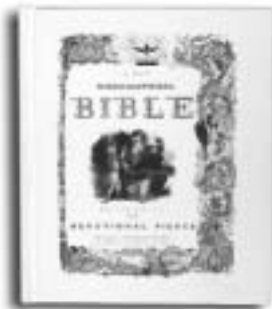
Gloria Russell

The Houston Genealogical Forum meets on the first Saturday during the months of September through May at the Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, (between Hillcroft & Beechnut), Houston, from 9:30 to Noon. Genealine—Voice Mail: 713-968-9750. Visitors are welcome. For those interested in more details on the Houston Genealogical Forum, visit their Web site at www.hgftx.org.



Christmas and Year-End Giving Opportunities

As you consider your Christmas list and Year-End giving, think of the **Bible in America Museum!**



- The Museum's facsimile **1837 Hieroglyphic Bible**, available for \$14.95 plus tax, is a perfect gift for children. It is available from the Museum or at the HBU bookstore.
- For the person who has everything, consider a gift to the **Bible in America Museum** in honor of that special individual. A colorful certificate will be mailed to honorees notifying them of your gift.
- The **Bible in America Museum** has acquired a limited number of actual pages from 1611 first edition King James Bibles. These are not replicas, but are over 350 year-old pages from fragments of antique Bibles. Donors who contribute a gift of \$1000 to the Museum will receive a pulpit edition page; those who contribute a gift of \$500 will receive a quarto edition page.
- The **Bible in America Museum** has a new program to digitize portions of its collection to increase the research capability of the collection and for preservation purposes. Donations to digitize specific books may be made, with the donor's name on the CD.



For information on any of these gift and giving opportunities, please contact Dr. Diana Severance at 281-649-3287 or dseverance@hbu.edu.

With the building of the Museum's new home in the planned Cultural Arts Center, special giving opportunities are also available. For more information contact Rick Ogden at 281-649-3355 or rogden@hbu.edu.

Open House!

You are cordially invited to an
Open House

at
The Bible in America Museum
on

Monday, November 1, 2004, 7-9 p.m.

featuring the 1837 Hieroglyphic Bible and
the newly expanded Bible exhibits.

A brief program, including the Museum's newly
completed film, will be at 7:30 p.m.

**To confirm your attendance please notify
Diana Severance at 281-649-3287 or dseverance@hbu.edu
by October 29.**

Two Special Exhibitions

Two museum exhibitions on display through the first of January will be of interest to *Newsletter* readers. Houston Museum of Natural Science's exhibition on the Dead Sea Scrolls will be on display through January 2, 2005. Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is regarded as the greatest archaeological find of the 20th century. The scrolls, written over 2000 years ago, are rarely seen outside of Jerusalem, but fragments of 13 are included in the Houston exhibit. The degree to which the ancient scrolls and later biblical manuscripts agreed is a testimony to the accurate preservation of the Scriptures. More information on the exhibit is available at www.hmns.org.

The Huntington Library, near Los Angeles, has an exhibition on *The Bible and the People* which will continue through January 5, 2005. Many rare volumes from the Huntington collection are on display, including a Tyndale New Testament, a Gutenberg Bible, and a John Eliot Algonquian Bible. The exhibit documents the Bible's impact on society and culture from medieval times to the present day. For more information see www.huntington.org.

"Sink the Bible to the bottom of the ocean, and still man's obligations to God would be unchanged. He would have the same path to tread, only his lamp and his guide would be gone; the same voyage to make, but his chart and compass would be overboard." — *Henry Ward Beecher*

The Old and New Testament Dissected

The following is taken from a Bible published by Matthew Carey in 1801. This accumulation of statistics was of course made before computers made such statistics more easily obtainable.

Books in the Old Testament 39
Chapters 929
Verses 23,214
Words 592,439
Letters 2,728,109

Books in the New Testament 27
Chapters 260
Verses 7,959
Words 181,253
Letters 838,380

The Apocrypha has
Chapters 183
Verses 6,081
Words 152,185

The middle chapter and the least in the Bible is Psalm cxvii.

The middle verse is the 8th of Psalm cxviii.

The word *And* occurs in the Old Testament 35,543 times.

The same in the New Testament also occurs 10,684 times.

The word *Jehovah* occurs 6,855 times.

The middle book of the Old Testament is Proverbs.

The middle chapter is Job xxix.

The middle verse is 2d Chronicles, chap. xx, the 17th verse.

The least verse is 1st of Chronicles ch. I. and 1st verse.

The middle book in the New Testament is 2d Thessalonians.

The middle chapters are Romans xiii. and xiv.

The middle verse is in Acts xviii. 17th verse.

The least verse is in John xi. verse 35.

The 21st verse, ch. vii of Ezra, has all the letters of the alphabet.

The chap. xix of the 2d of Kings and chap. xxxvii. Of Isaiah are both alike.

Why would anyone have bothered to collect such trivia? An old newspaper clipping found in one of the Bibles in the **Bible in America Museum's** collection tells the story. The Prince of Granada, heir to the Spanish throne, was imprisoned in solitary confinement for thirty three years in the Palace of Skulls in Madrid. A Bible was the only book he had throughout those years. At his death, the walls of his cell were covered with statistics about the Bible. The question arises: Did the Bible's message ever affect him? The newspaper article did not say. Perhaps the Prince was Spanish speaking, possessed only a King James English Bible, and trivia was all he could decipher.

The Bible in America Museum

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"THE WHOLE INSPIRATION OF OUR CIVILIZATION SPRINGS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST AND THE LESSONS OF THE PROPHETS. TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THESE FUNDAMENTALS IS A NECESSITY OF AMERICAN LIFE."

— HERBERT C. HOOVER

Please notify us of any changes or corrections in your address. If you would like to receive the *Bible in America Museum Newsletter* by e-mail and save the University postage, send your e-mail address to dseverance@hbu.edu.

Visit the Bible in America Museum

There is no charge for admission.

- Open Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Thursdays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
1st Saturday of the month, noon-5 p.m.
The Museum will not be open Thanksgiving week or January 1.
- Appointments for tours at other times may be made by calling 281-649-3287 or e-mailing: dseverance@hbu.edu.
- Tours for groups up to 45 are available.
- School groups and home schoolers are welcomed (grades 7 and above).
A curriculum is available.

The Museum is currently located in the Moody Library at Houston Baptist University.



Mabel Welch presents her century old German family Bible to Dr. Diana Severance, curator of The Bible in America Museum.

Recent Donations to the Bible in America Museum

- 1818 William Burkitt's *A Help and Guide to Christian Families*
- 1844 John Brown's *Concordance of the Holy Scriptures*
- 1851 Francis Kenrick's *The Acts of the Apostles, Epistles of St. Paul, the Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse*, revision of the Rhemish translation.
- 1857 *Elementary Scripture Questions on the Pentateuch* by the American Sunday School Union
- 1859 *Bessie Gorden's Lesson* by the American Sunday School Union
- 1884 German Lutheran hymnal
- 1892 Family Bible published in Galveston, Texas, quarto size
- 1895 *Self-Pronouncing Sunday School Teacher's Combination Bible*
- 1901 *Teacher's Bible*
- 1904 German Bible of Luther's translation