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 Newsletter
 

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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](http://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.



## 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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.huntington.org).

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"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*

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## 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.

