

9/11, 1777

The country was in a crisis. Enemy forces had taken over New York and would soon threaten the national capital. Of great concern to Congress was the shortage of Bibles in the land. The year? 1777.

The Chaplain of Congress, Patrick Allison, had brought the issue to Congress' attention. The authority to print the King James Version of the Bible resided with the King of England, and the British had not allowed the printing of English Bibles in America. All English Bibles in America had to be imported. The War for Independence disrupted normal shipping, and Americans were beginning to feel a shortage of Bibles by the fall of 1777. A

special Committee of Congress considered the problem, and on September 11 reported, "The use of the Bible is so universal and its importance so great that your committee refers the above to the consideration of Congress, and if Congress shall not think it expedient to order the importation of types and paper, the Committee recommends that Congress will order the Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 Bibles from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere, into the different parts of the States of the Union. Whereupon it was resolved accordingly to direct said Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 copies of the Bible."

The British occupied Philadelphia, forcing Congress to flee, before action was taken on the resolution. It is noteworthy today, however, that the Continental Congress thought that it was properly within its jurisdiction to purchase a supply of Bibles for the people. Toward the end of the American Revolution, Congress would again take action on the supply of Bibles in America. That event directly affected the publishing of the first English Bible in America in 1782. This Bible was published by Robert Aitken of Philadelphia. One of Aitken's rare Bibles is part of The Bible in America Museum's collection.

Visit the Bible in America Museum

- **Open Tuesdays**
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Thursdays**
11 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **Appointments can be made for tours at other times 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 welcome (grades 7 and above).**

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

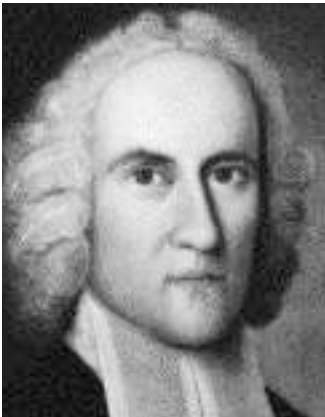
The Bible in America Collection

Jonathan Byrd, a Christian entrepreneur in Indiana, assembled a large collection of rare Bibles over a 30 year period. In 1997, Houston Baptist University purchased his American collection of more than 500 volumes for a planned museum that would portray the Bible's influence in America. Though there are other Bible Museums with exhibits of rare European and English Bibles, Houston Baptist University's collection is unique in its focus on the development of the American Bible. Only the American Bible Society in New York has a larger collection of specifically American Bibles. The collection is an important resource for the study of religion in America and the study of the Bible and Christianity's influence on the broader American culture.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Happy 300th	2
K. Hughes & Isaiah	2
Curator Appointed	3
Need a Gift?	3
A Digitized Museum	3
Acquisitions	4
Bible & Texas	4

Happy 300th Jonathan!



“THERE IS NO LEVELER LIKE CHRISTIANITY, BUT IT LEVELS BY LIFTING ALL WHO RECEIVE IT TO THE LOFTY TABLE-LAND OF A TRUE CHARACTER AND OF UNDYING HOPE FOR THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT.”

— JONATHAN EDWARDS

This year marks the tricentennial of the birth of Jonathan Edwards, the man many recognize as the most outstanding theologian America ever produced. Jonathan Edwards was born in 1703 in East Windsor Connecticut and educated at Yale College, which today is editing and publishing Edwards’ papers and collected works. For the tricentennial Yale is sponsoring a seminar on Edwards at the Library of Congress.

Jonathan Edwards first established his reputation as a great preacher in Northampton, Mass. While he was preaching a sermon on justification by faith alone, a revival broke out among his congregation and many came to faith in Christ. The publication of his sermons on justification were well read in England and America.

As a Great Awakening spread both in England and America, Edwards wrote several works on the nature of a true

conversion, including *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, based on I John 4, and *Some Thoughts Concerning Revival*.

Edwards is perhaps best remembered for what may be the most famous sermon in American history, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Those listening to the sermon recognized it as an appeal to recognize their sinfulness and flee to the safety of faith in Christ to avoid God’s punishment for sin. Edwards believed a person needed to recognize his sinfulness before he would acknowledge his need for a Savior. Edwards’ *Treatise on Religious Affections* emphasized that the affections, not simply the intellect, of a truly converted person are deeply changed. Edwards’ sermons and writings were thoroughly immersed in Scripture while also treating contemporary thought.

Edwards later left his church at Northampton and went to Stockbridge, Mass.

There he ministered to the native Americans as well as a small English congregation. He had more time to write in Stockbridge and produced two major works there: *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin*.

The Bible in America Museum has a rare copy of the first edition (1758) of Edwards’ *The Great Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*. The book was printed posthumously the year of Edwards death and contains a preface with “A Brief Account of the Book and its Author.” It’s still a book worth reading today, especially when 74% of professing Christians and 52% of evangelicals no longer believe in original sin.

Edwards left Stockbridge in 1758 to become President of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton). Though he died of a smallpox inoculation several weeks after assuming office, his writings have endured on his website: www.jonathanedwards.com

Isaiah’s word for today



When the Columbia disaster occurred February 1st, Karen Hughes reached for her Bible and turned to the Psalms. What she at first read was too upbeat for the moment, but a Biblical cross-reference led her to turn to Isaiah 40:26. There she read, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by name by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.” It was the word of comfort that she and a hurting nation needed. Mrs. Hughes shared the verse with President Bush, who read it to the nation as it grieved for those who had died in the disaster, but were still known by name to their Creator.

Karen Hughes was the featured speaker at Houston Baptist University’s Spirit of Excellence Gala on September 23. At that event she was given a framed page from an original *1611 King James Bible*. The Scriptures from Isaiah included Isaiah 40:26.

Curator appointed for Bible in America Museum

Diana Severance was recently appointed curator of the Bible in America Museum. Dr. Severance received her PhD in history



from Rice University. She comes to HBU from Klein ISD, where she was chief

historian for the Klein Historical Foundation. In that capacity, Dr. Severance helped establish the Klein Museum and Wunderlich Farm, a living history complex. During her tenure she wrote *Deep Roots, Strong Branches*, a history of the Klein family and Klein community, and three Texas Historical Markers commemorating the earliest history of northwest Harris Co. were placed at the Farm Museum complex.

Dr. Severance has written numerous articles

on Christian history and has been a long-time consultant for Christian History Institute's many films and publications. She was a major contributor to *Faith of God and Generals*, which focuses on the Christian faith of the leaders and people of the American Civil War. Most recently, she co-authored with her husband, Dr. Gordon Severance (who teaches economics at HBU), *Against the Gates of Hell*, a biography of Henry Perry, who was a missionary to Turkey from

1866-1913 and was an eyewitness to the massacre of Armenian Christians there.

Dr. Severance feels privileged to be working at the Bible in America Museum. The Museum's valuable collection of American Bibles and books can help the wider public better understand the Bible's influence on America's history and culture.

For the person who has everything

Do you know someone who has everything, yet you want to give them something special? Consider a donation to the Bible in America Museum in their honor. Whether it is a special birthday, anniversary, or just an occasion to show your appreciation, a gift to the Bible in America Museum would be unique and

**For That Special Occasion and the Person Who Has Everything:
Make a Gift in His or Her Honor
to The Bible in America Museum**

appreciated. A special certificate will be mailed to the honoree notifying them of your thoughtfulness.

The Museum also has pages from an original

1611 *King James Bible* which have been beautifully framed. These are available in quarto size for a gift of \$500 or in folio size for a gift of \$1,000. A smaller framed

1855 Bible page is available for a \$250 gift.

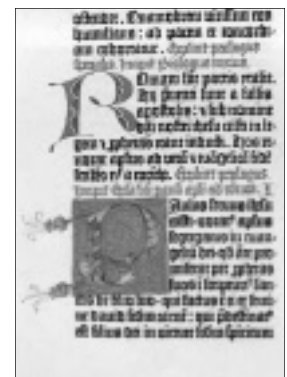
The Bible in America Museum is temporarily located in the Moody Library of Houston Baptist University. Funds are being raised for a Cultural Arts Center in which the Museum can expand and more fully display the story of the Bible's influence in America to the public.

A digitized museum

Computers continue to change our world in so many ways, including the way we view museums. Many museums are now putting their exhibits on-line. It is now very easy to visit some of the most elegant exhibits within the comfort of your own study. Plans have been made to digitize some of the Bible in America Museum's unique holdings and create a virtual tour on the Museum's web site.

You may also want to tour a few excellent web museums. The University of Texas has digitized the Gutenberg Bible in its Harry Ransom Center. (www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/gutenberg/project/). The *Gutenberg Latin Bible* was the first book printed with moveable type. It is estimated there were about 150 printed; only 48 are known to exist today. The British Museum also has a digitized Gutenberg (<http://prodigi.bl.uk/gutenberg/default.asp>).

— Continued on p. 4



The Bible in America Museum



7502 Fondren Road
Houston, TX 77074-3298

281-649-3287

Fax: 281-649-3474

E-mail: dseverance@hbu.edu

40 Years of Excellence

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HOUSTON TX
PERMIT #1879

“LET EVERY STUDENT BE PLAINLY
INSTRUCTED, AND EARNESTLY PRESSED
TO CONSIDER WELL, THE MAIN END
OF HIS LIFE AND STUDIES IT, TO KNOW
GOD AND JESUS CHRIST, WHICH IS
ETERNAL LIFE ...”

—JOHN 17:30

FROM THE RULES AND PRECEPTS OF
HARVARD, 1642

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.

How Many Bible Names Are There in Texas?

The Bible’s influence in America can be seen in America’s laws, music, and literature, as well as in the changed lives of individuals. The Bible’s influence can also be seen in the names given to places. Towns with names like Bethel or Eden come from the Bible. How many place names (names of towns, cities, or geographical features) can you find in Texas which are taken from the Bible? Send your list to the Bible in America Museum, 7502 Fondren Rd., Houston, TX 77074-3298 or e-mail to dseverance@hbu.edu by January 5, and we’ll give a copy of the booklet *The Bible in America* to the three winning entries with the most Biblical place names listed.

Digitized museum continued ...

Dr. Charles Ryrie, author of the *Ryrie Study Bible*, is also a collector of rare Bibles and manuscripts. Some years ago, SMU’s Bridwell Library had an exhibit drawn from Dr. Ryrie’s collection called “Formatting the Word of God.” The Bridwell Library was among the first to digitize an exhibit’s catalogue, and “Formatting the Word” can still be viewed at www.smu.edu/bridwell/html/ryriecatalog.htm/.

The Library of Congress has also been placing its exhibits online for several years. Its exhibit on “Religion and the Founding of the Republic” considers the religious background of colonial America, and shows through contemporary documents the strong Christian influence prominent in the early days of the American Republic. The exhibit can be found at <http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/>.

ACQUISITIONS

The Bible in America Museum recently received a donation of a portion of a Braille Bible, published by the American Bible Society. The Old Testament and Gospels consist of 16 volumes! The Museum has also been given two volumes of an early 1900s Bible for the blind with raised letters. On your next visit to the Museum, try reading these special Bibles.