

# Bible IN America™

MUSEUM

## Newsletter

Houston Baptist University

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## Let There Be Light

A crowd gathered around William Tyndale as he was led to the stake. The wood and brush were in place awaiting the executioner's torch. Tyndale had not set foot on English soil for ten years, yet his last thoughts were of England and its King. As he was tied to the stake, just before he was strangled, the crowd heard William Tyndale's earnest voice cry out, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!" It was his dying prayer before the pyre was lit and his remains burned to ashes.

William Tyndale (c. 1494-1535) was consumed with a passion for the Word of God. He longed for the day when even the common people in England would be able to read the Bible in their own language. The people could not know God's truth unless they knew God's Word. Yet, it was against the law to read the Bible in English, possess any portion of the Scriptures in English, or teach any portion of the Scriptures (such as the Lord's Prayer or the Ten Commandments) to one's own children in English. The people only knew what the priests told them, but the priests themselves were ignorant of the Scripture. Tyndale believed the Church and Papacy had become corrupt, hiding God's Word from the people by their traditions. When Tyndale discussed the issue with one cleric, the priest said, "We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's." Tyndale replied, "I defy the Pope and all his laws; and if God give me life, ere many years, the ploughboys will know more of the Scripture than you do."

Tyndale was a skillful linguist and asked permission of the Bishop of London to translate the New Testament from the Greek into English. When permission was denied, Tyndale fled to Europe to pursue his goal of providing a Bible in English for his countrymen. Hiding from the authorities, he spent his time in study and translation of the Scripture. By 1526 he had translated and printed a New Testament in English, which was smuggled back into England, hidden in bales of cloth.

The Bishop of London bought up copies and burned them at St. Paul's. Tyndale used the money to print a revised and improved version which was again smuggled into England. Though anyone found with English copies of the New Testament or any of Tyndale's other writings was punished, people still eagerly sought out and treasured these first printed copies of the Bible in English.

The King's new wife and queen, Ann Boleyn, favored Tyndale's work; her copy of Tyndale's New Testament is now in the possession of the British Library. King Henry VIII, however, was furious with Tyndale's translation, as were the church leaders. Chancellor Sir Thomas More (of *A Man for All Seasons* fame) wrote several works against Tyndale, calling him the "sonne of the devyll" and worse. Spies were sent out to hunt down Tyndale and bring him back to England. Tyndale fled from town to town, continuing his translation work and finally residing with an English merchant in Antwerp. There he was discovered, betrayed, imprisoned two years at Vilvoord, then tried and convicted as a heretic. Even in prison Tyndale's godly life bore witness to his faith; the jail keeper, his daughter, and other attendants converted to faith in Christ.

All who own an English Bible owe much to William Tyndale. He was the pioneer and first to translate the Scriptures from the Hebrew and Greek into

English. All other English translations have to some degree been based on his work. 85% of the 1611 King James Bible is Tyndale's translation.

Tyndale gave his life that the English people would have the light of God's Word. Three years after his death, King Henry VIII decreed that a copy of the English Bible be placed in every church in England. It was the answer to William Tyndale's dying prayer.



**“the books of William Tyndale, being compiled, published, and sent to England, it cannot be spoken what a door of light they opened to the eyes of the whole English nation, which before were many years shut up in darkness.”**

John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*



## William Tyndale coming to HBU!

The **Dunham Family Bible in America Museum** is pleased to sponsor *Fire for the Ploughman*, a two act, 90 minute drama on the trial of William Tyndale, performed by Jack Caulfield. Mr. Caulfield has performed at The Kennedy Center and other leading stages across America. His passionate portrayal of Tyndale's struggle to put God's Book into the language of the common people has won national acclaim, and we are pleased to bring this production to Houston and the HBU campus.

**Mark your calendars: Fire for the Ploughman**  
Glasscock Center  
October 28, 2005  
7:30 p.m.

The **Dunham Family Bible in America Museum** will be open for visitors the evening of the performance, from 5:00 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. There is no charge for either the Museum or the performance.

The **Dunham Family Bible in America Museum** contains an 1837 reprint of Tyndale's 1526 New Testament. In the margin are variant readings of five later translations: Coverdale's, Thomas Matthew's, Cranmer's, and the Geneva and Bishop's Bibles. All were made after Tyndale and before

the 1611 King James Bible; all were heavily based on William Tyndale's translation. Though the spelling is different, as shown in Tyndale's translation of Romans 1:19-20 in the **Museum's** 1836 edition, over four centuries later, the words are still familiar to readers of the English Bible.

For I am nott a shamed of the gospell of Christ/ because it is the power of God vnto salvacion to all that beleve/ namly to the iewe/ and also to the <sup>20</sup> gentyle/ For by it the rightewesness which commeth of God is opened/ from faythe to faythe. As it is written : The iust shall live by fayth.

## Words or Phrases First Introduced Into the English Language in Early English Bible Translations

The first recorded use of many of the words used in ordinary English today can be found in the early translations of the Bible into English. When John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English from Jerome's Latin Vulgate in the fourteenth century, he enlarged the English language by adapting many Latin words into his English Bible. The words *treasure* and *mystery*, *glory* and *horror*, *female* and *sex* all owe their English usage to Wycliffe's Bible. Tyndale, translating from the Hebrew and Greek in the 16th century, did not borrow as much from the Latin as did Wycliffe. He did coin words from the Dutch and Germanic sources (after

all, he did his translation work while in those two countries) as well as French. *Beautiful* and *ungodly* were such words. Many of Tyndale's coined words were compound words, such as *fisherman*, *castaway*, and *busybody*. Both Wycliffe's and Tyndale's translations included phrases which readily entered the language with their Bible translations - phrases like *a city on a hill*, *my brother's keeper*, *ye of little faith*, *salt of the earth*, and *thirty pieces of silver*. Visit the **Museum's** website at [www.hbu.edu/bia](http://www.hbu.edu/bia) under Bible's "Influence" to view a chart of other words and phrases first used in English by Bible translators.

## The Most Important Book in the English Language

In 1994 the British Library bought one of two surviving copies of William Tyndale's *1526 New Testament*, printed in Worms. (The other copy is in the the Württemberg Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart.) This was the first printed New

Testament in English; the British Library called this "the most important book in the English language." The price paid for the British Library's purchase? A little over £1 million!

# The Rest of the Story: The Apollo Prayer League

Marshall and Mildred Wilkes came to Houston in 1962 as part of the pioneers who established NASA. Both are now retired NASA employees. They called to provide more details about the microfilmed portion of the Bible mentioned in the last *Newsletter*. In the 1960's, Rev. James Stout was under contract with NASA to coordinate 13 chaplains at the manned spacecraft center in Houston. It was from this group that the Apollo Prayer League was formed. Composed of engineers, administrators and astronauts, the Apollo Prayer League was an important support to the Apollo program. Within a month after being formed, the League had 50,000 members, and soon there were prayer groups around the world. One of the projects of the Apollo Prayer League was to put a Bible on the moon. The problem was that very little weight could be transported to the moon and back. PCMI Microfilm developed by NCR allowed the



*The Wilkes with some of their NASA memorabilia.*

creation of the "World's Smallest Bible" – 1245 pages of the King James Bible, all 773,746 words on featherweight microfilm 1" x 2" in size. The Bible required a magnification of 100x in order to be read. Apollo 12 was to take a number of these Bibles to the moon, but they were forgotten on board the Command Module by the crew. Jim Lovell took them on Apollo 13, but an explosion on one of the oxygen tanks caused the mission to be aborted before the lunar landing. Finally, Edgar Mitchell carried 300 of the microfilmed Bibles in his space suit on Apollo 14's voyage to the moon and back. Complete microfilmed Bibles were distributed to dignitaries, including

President H.W. Bush and Secretary James Baker. 50 page portions were distributed to supporters of the Apollo Prayer League. Marshall Wilkes kindly donated his framed portion of the lunar Bible to the **Dunham Family Bible in America Museum**.

## A Special Group-Our Volunteers: In Their Own Words

The **Dunham Family Bible in America Museum** is blessed with wonderful volunteers. These volunteers keep the Museum open on a regular basis, provide tours for special groups, and help promote the Museum's activities and programs. We thought you'd like to hear why these special people have chosen to volunteer for the **Dunham Family Bible in America Museum**. Here are some of them, in their own words:

*"When our Sunday school class toured the Museum, we were all very impressed with the holdings, the display and focus of the Museum, as well as the hospitality and knowledge of the curator, Dr. Diana Severance. In the past, I had read an interesting book*



*Chris Huls and Torah Scroll*

*about the printing of the Bible in English. It had not occurred to me that the history of printing the Bible in the United States was so rich with devotion and history. I love the stories about the development of written Algonquian so that John Eliot could translate the*

*Bible for this native American tribe. I'm gratified by the obvious importance that God's word had for the founding fathers and the life and education of those early American families. So, I volunteered to learn more myself and to share my enthusiasm for God's Word and the history of the Bible's impact in America."* – Chris Huls

*"After graduating from HBU in 1980, God is further enriching my life as He has brought me under the guidance of Dr. Diana Severance, curator of the Bible in America Museum. I now have an opportunity to volunteer in the Museum and to share my knowledge of the impact of the Bible in America with people I meet."* – Caryn Powell

*"I want to become more knowledgeable about the contribution of the Bible to the development of this country and to the values I feel are so important to our way of life. As a*



*Gordon Rouze's hobby is designing and printing miniature books. Caryn, Gloria, and Gordon are standing in Gordon's home print shop.*

*more about the history of Christianity and how dangerous it was to put Bible truths in print so that we can read it today in our homes."* – Gloria Rouze

*"I volunteered as a docent for the Bible in America Museum for two major reasons. The first one was the opportunity to serve my Lord in a special way. The second was to promote an awareness of how the Bible provided the principles that guided the creation of our*

*nation's founding documents, lest we forget. Thank you, Houston Baptist University and Dr. Diana Severance for the opportunity to be involved in such an important venture."* – Thelma Dowies

We must mention that Caryn Powell is Gordon and Gloria Rouze's daughter. Caryn's high school son Matthew has been putting in some volunteer hours for the Museum this summer as well, so three generations of one family have become important **Museum** supporters.



*Thelma Dowies at SETHSA Conference.*

**Would you like to be a part of this special group?**

Contact Diana Severance at 281-649-3287 or [dseverance@hbu.edu](mailto:dseverance@hbu.edu) for more information.



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visit our Website at [www.hbu.edu/bia](http://www.hbu.edu/bia)

“I BELIEVE THE ENTIRE BILL OF RIGHTS CAME  
INTO BEING BECAUSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OUR  
FOREFATHERS HAD OF THE BIBLE AND THEIR  
BELIEF IN IT.”

CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN

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

## Visit the Dunham Family Bible in America Museum

There is no charge for admission.

### Museum hours:

- April – May:  
Tuesdays, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Thursdays, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
1st Saturday in May, noon – 5 p.m.  
Tours at other times are available by appointment.
- June-August the Museum will be open for tours by appointment only.
- September – May:  
Tuesdays, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Thursdays, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Second Saturdays of the month: noon – 5 p.m.
- Tours at other times, including group tours, are available by appointment.
- A curriculum packet is available for teachers, designed for grades 7 and up.

For appointments or more information, Contact  
Dr. Diana Severance at 281-649-3287 or [dseverance@hbu.edu](mailto:dseverance@hbu.edu).

## Recent Acquisitions

Houston’s Museum of Printing History recently gave to the **Dunham Family Bible in America Museum** an 8’x4.5’ stained glass window of the Apostle John. The colorful window shows the Apostle John writing, with an eagle, icon of the Apostle John, at his feet.

Yvonne Varley donated to the **Museum** a number of 19th century Bibles and study aids which had been in her family. Among the books is *One Hundred Sermon Pictures* by artist Frank Beard, printed in 1902. Beard used the Bible to shine light on the social issues of his day. His illustrations are both colorful and spiritually thought-provoking.

## Tyndale was the First – But Not the Last

“Since 1526, there have been of the whole Bible or New Testament alone, made from Hebrew and Greek into English, in the UK and USA, about nine hundred fresh translations. In addition, since 1526 there have been of existing whole Bible or New Testament translations in the UK or the USA, some three thousand new editions. The statistics of print runs are either long vanished or carefully guarded. It is impossible to calculate the number of English Bibles of all kinds printed and in circulation around the world since 1526. One simply thinks of a number, any number, and goes on adding noughts.” David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 134.