

**Beyond the Sacred Page:
Supplementary Material in 19th century American Bibles,
especially as found in The Bible in America Museum collection**

by
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The story is told that in early 19th century New England, a great discussion arose in a church when a member suggested that during the Sabbath service, in addition to the sermon, a selection from the Bible be read aloud. Everyone in the congregation had an opinion, and the deacons sat aside a special meeting to consider whether or not it was proper to read aloud from the Bible during the service. At the deacons' meeting, the discussion went on for some time, when one deacon suddenly held up his bible and exclaimed triumphantly, "Look, it says right here on the very first page, 'authorized to be read in the churches.'" The deacons were relieved that an answer with biblical support had been found for the question, seeming not to realize that this phrase found on the title page of many King James Version English bibles was not really part of the original Bible.² This amusing story illustrates that there is often much in our printed bibles that is not strictly Biblical.

Not only is the format of our printed bibles very different from the earliest manuscripts of Scripture, which had no chapters and verses, no spaces between words, and no punctuation marks; but a tremendous amount of additional matter is often printed and bound with the Scriptures.

Before the advent of printing, bible manuscripts often included additional matter, from the highly illuminated decorations to glosses which sometimes consumed more of a page than the Scripture text itself. The glosses or commentaries had accumulated over the centuries, incorporating comments by some of the earliest church fathers as well as later scholastics. Prologues and introductory material by

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² *The Holy Bible*, published in parallelism with philological explanatory Annotation, ed. T.W. Coit, D.D. Boston, 1834, Preface. Most of the American bibles referenced are in the collection of Houston Baptist University's The Bible in America Museum.

St. Jerome were a part of many Vulgate manuscripts. Tables, almanacs, and charts for the liturgical use of Scripture were also included.³

Additional matter in the English Wycliffe bibles varied from manuscript to manuscript, but, like their Vulgate counterparts, many had prologues before the books and tables of epistles and gospels for church use. Some included translations of Jerome's letters to Paulinus and to Desiderius. Since the division of the Scripture into chapters had been made about 1250, the Wycliffe bibles had chapter divisions. Some included drawings of a hand out in the margin, pointing to an especially noteworthy passage.⁴ Early printings of the Bible also included supplementary material, pictorial as well as verbal. The subject of bible illustrations is fascinating, even if sometimes salacious and bizarre, but the focus here will be on the written additions. A folio bible printed in Germany in 1480 was probably the first to have summaries placed at the head of each chapter. 15th century German publishers added other features to their bibles as well, including an interpretive list of Hebrew names, a guide to the Bible's contents, a list of canonical books, marginal references, and a table of scriptural readings for the liturgical year.⁵ In 1486 the Press of Strassburg printed the first bible with a title page – though this title page lacked that authorization to be read in the churches our New Englanders welcomed in their deacons' meeting. Some bibles were printed with a history of the text of Scripture and a section on medieval exegesis.

The earliest printed English bibles also included supplementary material. William *Tyndale's 1534 New Testament* included his "Unto the Reader" and prologues to each of the Epistles. At the end of the Testament he included a table of the scriptural readings from the Salisbury plan of the liturgical year. On the very last page, Tyndale included brief explanations of 5 passages of Scripture. Bluntly

³ Valerie R. Hotchkiss & Charles Ryrie, ed. *Formatting the Word*. Dallas, Texas: Bridwell Library, 1998, 34-39.

⁴ David Daniell. *The Bible in English*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003, 84.

⁵ S.L. Greenslade. *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol. 3. Cambridge University Press, 1963, 419-421.

honest, Tyndale wrote, “These things have I added to fill up the leaf withal.” This would not be the last time publishers added material to their bibles simply because there were a few blank pages at the end.⁶

Matthew’s Bible of 1537 was the first English bible to include extensive notes. Over 2000 notes, taken from the writings of Tyndale, Coverdale, Luther, Lefevre, Olivetan, and Bucer presented a distinctly Protestant Reformation perspective. Though dedicated to Henry VIII, the King quickly issued a royal injunction forbidding the printing or importation of English Bibles with notes or prologues without the King’s authorization.⁷ In addition to the notes, *Matthew’s Bible* included two tables found in many later Bibles, including American ones: French theologian Olivetan’s 26 page “Table of the Principal Matters contained in the Bible” and a “Brief rehearsal of the years passed since the beginning of the world unto this year of our Lord.”

The *Great Bible* of 1539, which was ordered placed in every church in England, dropped many of the provocative notes from *Matthew’s Bible* to which the King and his ministers objected. However, the 1560 *Geneva Bible*, published by the English Marian exiles in Calvin’s Geneva, had more notes and additional matter than any previous English bible. The *Geneva Bible* is important to the American story since it was the bible most likely used by many at Jamestown and definitely used among the Pilgrims and early Puritans of Massachusetts. It was a bible designed to be studied and read carefully; and included headnotes to each page, summary arguments to each book and chapter, and brief notes at the hard to understand parts. For the first time in English, chapters were divided into verses, making a concordance a useful study tool. Illustrations were added, not for decoration, but to enhance understanding – drawings of the furniture of the tabernacle, maps of the Exodus wandering, sketches of Ezekiel’s visions.

⁶ Tyndale’s *New Testament*, ed. David Daniell. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989.

⁷ Rev. Henry Cotton. *Editions of the Bible and Parts Thereof in English from the Year MDV to MDCCCL*. Oxford University Press, 1852, 277-293.

Several tables found in earlier bibles on the continent were also included – chronological tables and “the Principal things contained in the Scriptures.” The table of the interpretation of Hebrew names found in German bibles almost one hundred years earlier was included, but the *Geneva Bible* provided a reason for its importance:

Whereas the wickedness of time, and the blindness of the former age hath suche that all things altogether have bene abused and corrupted, so that the very right names of diverse holie men named in the Scriptures have been forgotten, and now seme strange unto us, and the names of infants that shulde ever have some godlie advertisements in them, and shulde be memorials and markes of the children of God received into his housholde, hath been hereby also changed and made the signes and badges of idolatrie and heathenish impietie, we have now set forthe this table of the names that be most used in the olde Testament with their interpretations, as the Ebrewe importeth, partly to call backe the godlie fro that abuse, when they shal know the true names of the godlie fathers, & what they signifie, that their children now named after them may have testimonies by their very names, that they are within that faithful familie that in all their doings had ever God before their eyes, and that they are bounde by these their names to serve God from their infancie & have occasion to praise him for his workes wrought in them & their fathers: but chiefly to restore the names to their integrities, whereby many places of the Scriptures and secret mysteries of the holie Gost shal better be understand.⁸

This table of Hebrew names continued to be printed in American bibles well into the 19th century. Knowing this helps us better understand why and how so many colonial Puritans had obscure names from the Old Testament.

The 1569 edition of the *Geneva Bible* also included: a cycle of the Sun, Declaration of the Golden Number (to determine the age of the moon), Faires in France, and additional historical material on the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, the Maccabees and intertestamental period. Later editions included even more extensive notes, reflecting the Calvinistic theology and politics of the English exiles in Geneva.⁹

The *Geneva Bible* was extremely popular, but it was never approved by the Church of England, as was the 1568 *Bishops' Bible*. Though it lacked the extensive notes of the *Geneva Bible*, the *Bishops'*

⁸ *The Bible and Holy Scriptures*. Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560.

⁹ *Editions of the Bible*, 294-304.

Bible unsurprisingly included helps important for the liturgical year – proper lessons for Sunday and holy days, proper psalms on certain days, a 30 year almanac to calculate the date of Easter, and holy days to be observed. Among the tables was one regularly included in later American bibles – a table of consanguinity and affinity, determining in which kinship relations marriage was forbidden.¹⁰

When John Reynolds presented to King James I the proposal for a new Bible translation at the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, the king was quite amenable – only if the bible was without notes. King James especially opposed the *Geneva Bible*, considering its notes “partial, untrue, seditious, and favouring too much trayterous conceits.” He even gave chapter and verse to support his claim that the Geneva Bible was anti-monarchical. His objections began with the note on Exodus 1:19, which praised the Hebrew midwives for not killing the Hebrew babies, thus approving the disobedience to Kings and sovereign princes.¹¹

Though the bible printed in 1611 and dedicated to King James did not contain Geneva’s troublesome notes, it did contain supplemental material. In addition to the “Dedication to the King” and the “Address of the Translators to the Reader,” the 1611 bible included a calendar, an almanac with a table to find Easter, tables of psalms and lessons, with the days to be observed, names and orders of the books, a 36 page table of the genealogy of Scripture, a map of Canaan, and marginal notes. As the century progressed, later editions of what we now call the *King James Version* were printed with additional notes, marginal references, and tables. In perfect irony, several editions were even printed with notes from the Geneva Bible.¹²

¹⁰ *Editions of the Bible*, 304.

¹¹ P. Heylyn, *Aerius Redivivus. The History of the Presbyterians*, 2nd ed. (London, 1672) Book Six, p. 214, quoted in Maurice S. Betteridge. “The Bitter Notes: The Geneva Bible and Its Annotations,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 14, no.1 (Spring, 1983), 48-49.

¹² *Editions of the Bible*, 305-306; *The Minutes of the Report on Versions*. American Bible Society, 36th Report, 1852; “Bibles, Annotated, and Bible Summaries,” *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 2, 158-159, as accessed through the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, www.ccel.org.

Throughout the American colonial period, the printing of English bibles remained under the King's authority, and all English bibles in America were imported from the Mother country. After 1776, American printers began printing bibles for the first time and included much of the additional material which had been included in bibles printed in England. This additional material was to aid the individual's reading of the bible in five areas – basic Bible content, chronology and time of the Bible's events, historical and geographical setting of the Bible, theological perspective, and practical application.

Much of the supplementary material was devoted to basic Bible content. A list of the names of the books of the Old and New Testaments with the number of chapters in each showed which books were accepted as canonical Scripture. Page headings, chapter summaries and paragraph notations helped the reader remember key ideas and search for particular passages. "The Contents of the books of the Old and New Testaments," first published in *Matthew's Bible* in 1537, was first published in an American bible in 1823, almost three hundred years later, and continued to be included in bibles throughout the 19th century.¹³ The "Contents" gave a brief title to each chapter in the Bible, enabling the reader to read through a summary of the entire Bible in eight pages or less, depending on the size of the bible.

An "Index of the Holy Bible," first published in printer Isaiah Thomas' 1791 folio and published throughout the following century, gave an account of the key passages of Scripture from Adam to Christ and the apostles. It also included historical background and specific dates of events. Many bibles included a concordance. John Brown's concordance was the one most often included in the 19th century.

¹³ *The Holy Bible*. Stereotyped by E. White, New York. Philadelphia: Kimber & Sharpless, [1823].

“The Old and New Testament Dissected,” first included in printer Matthew Carey’s 1801 bible and in many thereafter, is a real curiosity.¹⁴ This is a detailed analysis of words and letters in the bible, all calculated in the pre-computer age. In this table are included such tidbits as: the word “Jehovah” occurs 6,855 times; the word “and” occurs 35,543 times in the Old Testament and 10,684 times in the New Testament; the middle verse of the bible is II Chron. 20:17; the New Testament contains 181,253 words and 838,380 letters. Who would have had the time or even bothered to count and calculate all these letters and words? An old newspaper clipping found between the pages of a bible in The Bible in America Museum’s said that the statistics were compiled by the Prince of Granada, heir to the Spanish throne, during his life imprisonment in the Palace of Skulls, Madrid. The Prince had only one book, the Bible, to read during his 33 years of solitary confinement in the prison. Upon his death, the statistics were found written on all the walls of his prison cell. Though an expert in Bible trivia, there is no evidence the Prince’s soul was affected by the Bible’s message.

“A Table of the several passages in the Old Testament quoted by Christ and his Apostles in the New Testament” first appeared in Matthew Carey’s 1803 quarto Bible.¹⁵ This table went through the Old Testament book by book and listed every passage quoted and gave the New Testament passage where it was quoted. Baltimore printer John Hagerty in 1812 was the first American printer to include a “Synopsis of the Holy Bible or Brief Commentary on the several books contained in the Old and New Testaments.” The synopsis consisted of paragraph summaries of each of the books in the Bible, including the meaning of the name of the book, summary of the book’s contents, and the book’s spiritual import.

The most frequent supplement to aid an understanding of the Bible’s content were the marginal Scriptural references. In 1647 John Canne (c. 1590-d. 1667?), an English minister and later a Brownist

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible*. Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1801.

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible*. Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1803.

who took refuge in Amsterdam, issued a fully cross-referenced bible, *The Bible with Marginal Notes, Shewing Scripture to be the Best Interpreter of Scripture*. Canne's work went through 9 editions between 1662 and 1754. In 1664, the first King James Version was issued with Canne's notes and a preface by John Canne. Canne's references were first used in an American Bible in 1807 and continued to be used in numerous American bibles in the 19th century. In time, however, the references were added to and diluted with misprints and false references. However, using the Bible to interpret itself continued to be a goal of Bible students throughout the century.¹⁶

A second category of supplementary material was devoted to chronology and time. These supplements helped the reader see the chronological relationship between the various events of the bible and their own day. Biblical events were precursors and in a stream with events in the readers own day and age. Matthew Carey's 1801 edition included "A Chronological Index of the Years and Times from Adam unto Christ, Proved by the Scriptures, from the collection of divers authors." This Index largely followed the chronology of Archbishop Ussher and divided the history of the world into 7 ages. It carefully noted that the coming of Christ occurred 483 years from the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple, following Daniel's prophecy, and computed the age of the world down to 1801, concluding: "Whereupon we reckon, that from Adam unto Christ, are 3974 years, six months, and ten days; and from the birth of Christ, unto this present year, is 1801."¹⁷ Bible readers of the 19th century saw their world in a continuum with the Biblical world. Archbishop Ussher's chronology was first included in a *King James Version Bible* in 1680. In the 1701 revision of the *King James Version*, Bishop Lloyd placed Usher's chronological dates at the head of each column. These dates continued to be routinely placed in bibles well into the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁸ Isaac Collins' 1791 bible included an

¹⁶ "Bibles, annotated, and Bible Summaries," 159; Margaret Hills, *The English Bible in America*. New York: The American Bible Society and The New York Public Library, 1962, 25.

¹⁷ *The Holy Bible*, containing the Old and New Testaments. Philadelphia: Printed for Mathew Carey, 1801.

¹⁸ "Bibles, Annotated, and Bible Summaries," 159.

“Account of the Dates or Time of Writing the Books of the New Testament.”¹⁹ This table was prepared by John Witherspoon the President of Princeton. Witherspoon placed Matthew as the earliest book written, in 39 AD, and has John writing between 94-98AD. Though this feature was included in many later bibles, others often assigned different dates for the various books.

Closely related to additions related to chronology are those related to history and geography. One of the attacks upon the Bible’s authenticity made by skeptics, of that day and since, was that the Biblical writings were more mythical than historical. To counter such criticisms, 19th century American bibles included an increasing array of supplements enhancing an understanding of the historical and geographical setting for biblical events. Isaiah Thomas’ 1791 folio bible, and numerous bibles to follow, included a table relating to Roman and Jewish treatment of time. What was meant by the ninth hour? How did the Jewish month Nisan correspond to the American months? The table on time answered those questions.

The 1640 German Ernestine bible was the first to have a table of Scripture measure, weights and coins. Dr. Cumberland, bishop of Peterborough, created a comparable table used in many English and American bibles. The table showed the measures of length, surfaces, capacity, weights, and also showed how to refigure such measurements in English units. This table helped the reader determine the English equivalent of a cubit and an ephah. (Incidentally, Dr. Cumberland was a Cambridge Platonist who died at the age of 87, in 1719. If you have never heard of him before, you probably have heard of his most famous quote, “It is better to wear out than to rust out.”)

Maps were included in many bibles. In the earliest bibles, maps were often quite decorative and stylistic. As the 19th century progressed, they became more scientific and accurate.²⁰ Many bibles also included an article describing the geography of “Judea, Palestine, or the Holy Land.”

¹⁹ *The Holy Bible*. Trenton, New Jersey: Isaac Collins, 1791.

²⁰ Paul Gutjahr. *An American Bible*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999, 63-69.

A table of “Offices and Conditions of Men” was one of the most frequent additions to early American bibles. Often, when there was just one blank page at the end of a testament or bible, a printer included this supplement. The table listed the various titles of leaders and their functions, from patriarch to Persian Tirshatha, from religious sects such as the Herodians, to ecclesiastical leaders such as Apostles. Such tables helped the reader understand the Bible in its literal sense. These terms were the titles and positions of literal, historic people, not allegorical or mythical inventions.

Bibles sometimes included supplements on post-Biblical Christian history. Matthew Carey’s 1801 bible, and numerous quarto bibles patterned after it, included a “Brief chronological Catalogue of the Apostles and their Successors, who founded and presided over the Five Grand Apostolical Churches.” Based largely on the writings of the church historian Eusebius, this catalogue gave the names of the leaders and years they served in the churches of Antioch, Rome, Jerusalem, Byzantium or Constantinople, and Alexandria, through the time of the Council of Nicea. One motive for including this material might have been to show that the Church at Rome was not considered the supreme church at that time. Opening with the church at Antioch, the catalogue records:

It is generally acknowledged by the Romish writers, that a church was founded here by St. Peter some considerable time before that at Rome; and partly because here it was that the venerable name of Christians first commenced. The fathers in the council at Constantinople ... style the church of Antioch, *The most ancient and truly apostolical*; and S. Chrysostom, *The head of the whole world*.²¹

John Holbrook’s 1817 quarto bible published in Brattleborough, Vermont included “An Account of the Lives, Sufferings, and Martyrdoms, of the Apostles and Evangelists,” which was included in many other bibles in the 19th century. This gave a brief account of the lives and deaths of leaders of the early church, from the martyrdom of Stephen, through the lives of the 11 apostles, Paul and Barnabas. Several school bibles later included this account as a supplement.

²¹ *The Holy Bible*. Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1801.

The “To the Reader” included in many 19th century American bibles was written by John Witherspoon for Isaac Collins’ 1791 bible as a replacement for the “Dedication to King James” at the front of the King James bibles. Newly independent Americans did not want a dedication to a King of England at the front of their bibles. Witherspoon’s introduction was basically a history of the formation of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament and the providential preservation of these Scriptures. He surveyed the history of bible translations, beginning with the Greek Septuagint and the earliest translations of the Christian Scriptures before focusing on the English translations, concluding with the translation sponsored by King James.

A fourth category of supplemental material was theological. There were few supplements in this category except for bibles which included commentaries, which will be considered shortly. One supplement, however, in a few American bibles, was “A Concise View of the evidences of the Christian Religion” by Rev. John Fletcher, a French speaking Swiss who became an Anglican priest and a leading theologian of early Methodism²². For a time Fletcher had been considered the successor to John Wesley, but preceded Wesley in death, dying in 1785. Matthew Carey included Fletcher’s essay on evidences in his 1805 quarto edition of the Bible, twenty years after Fletcher’s death. In his essay Fletcher answered some of the critics of the Bible and the followers of the Enlightenment who rejected the Bible’s, and thus Christianity’s, veracity and authority. He noted that thousands of Jews would not have humbled themselves to embrace a shameful cross and face death themselves unless they were totally convinced of the truth of Jesus’ claims. Writers of the Bible were not seeking glory, position, or wealth. They were not deceivers, but humble men who even exposed their own faults to the world in their writings. The miracles of Jesus and the apostles testified to their words. The facts of these miracles were never denied by contemporaries, only attributed to the devil by gainsayers and scoffers.

²² *The Holy Bible*. Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1805; A.W. Ward & A.R. Waller, ed. *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*. New York: Putnam, 1907-1921, vol. 10, 19-21. [N.Y.: Bartleby.com, 2000].

As in the earliest days of the church, Fletcher argued that the fulfillment of Scriptural prophecies attested to their divine source. Not only the many prophecies which Jesus himself fulfilled in His life and death, but also the four kingdoms of Daniel’s prophecies, prophecies of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, Jesus’ own prophecies of the persecution of His disciples, and the scattering and suffering of Jews as described by Moses 3000 years ago in Deuteronomy 28. In a more personal way, the efficacy of Scripture could be seen in its power to wound, make alive, and heal the soul. In view of the fact that Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, even being adopted by the educated among the Greeks and Romans, Fletcher thought it was as absurd to think the apostles and writers of Scripture were cheats, liars, and frauds as to think that the sailors of the British Empire “sink men of war with a puff of breath, while our soldiers batter down ramparts with snow-balls.”²³

Beginning in 1578 the *Geneva Bible* had a poem “Of the incomparable Treasure of the Holy Scriptures” followed by a prayer for the true use of the Scriptures. A few American bibles, such as the 1794 edition of William Burkitt’s *Expository Notes* also included a prayer to be said before reading the Scriptures. Reading the Scriptures was a spiritual, not just an intellectual exercise. The prayer asked for the assistance of the Holy Spirit in understanding, receiving the Scripture’s teachings, and daily endeavouring to follow “the blessed steps of his [Jesus’] most holy life.”²⁴

This leads to a final category of supplementary material in bibles, practical application. How was the way one lived to be affected by the Bible? The previously mentioned “Table of Kindred and Affinity wherein whosoever are related are forbidden in Scripture and by our Laws, to marry together” would fall in this category. Amazingly, bibles which have no supplementary material at all often included this table on the last page of the bible or testament. This, along with the table of names of

²³ *The Holy Bible*, Containing the Old and New Testaments. Printed and Published by Mathew Carey, 1805.

²⁴ William Burkitt. *Expository Notes With Practical Observations upon the Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherein the Whole of the Sacred Text is Recited, the Sense Explained, and the instructive Example of the Blessed Jesus, and his Apostles, to our Imitation: recommended.* New Haven: Abel Morse for the David Austin of Elizabethtown, 1794.

offices, was the most frequent table in 19th century American bibles. Matthew Carey's 1801 bible included "A Clergyman's Address to Married Persons at the Altar." This marriage sermon explained the duties of husband and wife, noting that it was the joining not of hands but of hearts that constituted marriage in God's sight. The last paragraph concluded:

In a word, be habitually loving and kind to one another. Have no separate secrets, nor allow yourselves any airs of mystery; but open your whole hearts to each other. Conceal as much as possible one another's foibles, and cultivate habits of affability, forbearance, and good nature. Never be sullen, or in a pet with each other, especially in the presence of strangers. And, to say all in all, love and live together as the heirs of glory; and may the richest blessings of Almighty God be your mutual portion in this world and the next.²⁵

In his 1802 quarto edition, as well as a few later editions, Matthew Carey also included William Cowper's "Portrait of an Apostolic Preacher."

A bible published by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1829 was among the first to include William Stones' "A Guide to Regular Perusal of the Holy Scriptures."²⁶ Stones outlined a plan of daily Bible reading in which the New Testament was read twice in a year and the Old Testament once. Daily personal and family Bible reading was a regular practice for many Americans in the 19th century. Many came to know large sections of the Scriptures by memory simply from having read through the Bible in this regular fashion.

William Burkitt prefaced his *Expository Notes* with an "Address to Family Governors." Burkitt particularly designed his notes to be used by families during their daily devotions. He wrote:

My design in preparing and giving these notes into your hands, is to oblige you to read a part of the Holy Scriptures in your families every day; and to invite you thereunto, the sacred text is here at large recited and controversies declined. And I do most affectionately request you, not to suffer the holy word of God, which is in

²⁵ *The Holy Bible*. Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1801.

²⁶ *The Holy Bible*. Stereotyped James Connor, New York. New York: J. Emory and B. W: the Methodist Episcopal Church, at the Conference Office, 1829. Margaret Hills notes this was first included in an 1826 bible. *English Bible in America*, 86.

your hands, to lie by you as a neglected book; but daily to read it in and to your families, with a simplicity of mind to be directed and instructed by it.

William Burkitt, a vicar and lecturer in Dedham, England, lived from 1659-1703. Ninety years after his death his annotated bible was first published in America. As late as 1844, an American reviewer wrote of Burkitt's *Notes*, "The humble Christian who wishes to understand the Gospel and make it the foundation of his hopes for eternity will find the book one of his best and closest companions."²⁷

Burkitt was only one of several seventeenth and eighteenth century English ministers whose annotated bibles or commentaries continued to be published in America well into the nineteenth century. The annotated bibles read by 19th century Americans were largely written in the previous century by English ministers still under the Puritan influence or part of the 18th century revival. Like Burkitt, many of the commentators sought to avoid controversial disputes on doctrine in their notes. Their notes were to help clarify the text, not impose a theological system. They aimed to edify the humble soul who had not time or resources to spend pouring over scholarly works. They wrote with the strong Protestant conviction stemming from the Reformation that every individual Christian was able to read and understand the Scriptures.²⁸

Leading commentators published in 19th century America were Jean Ostervald, Philip Doddridge, John Brown, and Thomas Scott. A brief look at each of these individuals and their work will provide a better understanding of the framework Americans used in reading their bibles.

Jean Ostervald, who lived from 1663-1747, was a preacher in Neuchatel, Switzerland. In his preaching and writing he tried to replace a preoccupation with doctrinal disputes with personal piety and genuine Gospel preaching. On his pastoral visits he discovered great ignorance and indifference among his flock, prompting him to write *The Arguments of the Books and Chapters of the Old and New*

²⁷ "Literary Notices," *New England and Yale Review*, vol. 2, Issue 8 (October, 1844), 638.

Testaments, with practical observations. The Society for the Propagating Christian Knowledge had Ostervald's notes translated into English, and they were incorporated into several Bible printings.²⁹ Ostervald's notes were first used in an American printing by Isaac Collins in 1791 and continued to be used in various American Bibles at least into the 1820's. These notes were in the bible from which Abraham Lincoln learned to read (The Lincoln Family Bible is now in the Abe Lincoln Birthplace in Kentucky, administered by the National Park Service). In his introduction, Ostervald explained the "Necessity and Usefulness of Reading the Holy Scriptures:"

Christians are utterly inexcusable who have it in their power to read the Word of God, and will not do it. God, in his infinite wisdom, and unbounded goodness, hath supplied men, by the revelation of his will, with the most perfect means of instruction. He inspired the prophets and apostles, and was pleased their writings should be preserved, that in them truth might always remain pure, without being corrupted by the forgetfulness and inconstancy, the carelessness or malice of men. The Scriptures, therefore, are the most valuable blessing God ever bestowed upon us, except the sending his Son into the world; they are a treasure containing every thing that can make us truly rich and truly happy. We must therefore, have very little regard for God and his gifts, if we neglect to make a right use of this...³⁰

We know Lincoln read Ostervald's notes as well as the Bible itself, because when a group of black leaders presented him with a bible during the Civil War, in his letter thanking them, he paraphrased Ostervald: "In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it."³¹

²⁸ Marion Simms. *The Bible in America*. New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1936, 131-134.

²⁹ "Ostervald, Jean Frederic," *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. VIII, 283.

³⁰ *The Holy Bible*, Containing the Old and New Testaments: Together with the Apocrypha; and Arguments Prefixed to the Different Books: With Moral and Theological Observations Illustrating each Chapter. Composed by the Reverend Mr. Ostervald, professor of Divinity, and one of the Ministers of the Church at Neuchatel Swisserland [sic]. Translated at the desire of, and recommended by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. New York: Smith & Forman, George Long, Printer, 1813.

³¹ Paul M. Angle & Earl Schenck Miers, ed. *The Living Lincoln*. New York: Barnes & Noble books, 1955, 618-619. Lincoln's parents' Bible is now in the National Park Service Abe Lincoln Birthplace in Kentucky. www.npw.gov/abli/biblej.htm, accessed August 29, 2004.

Ostervald emphasized that the Bible should be read privately to better be understood when hearing it preached. The reason many had entirely false and impious notions was because people did not know the Scriptures. In discussing how the Bible was to be read for edification, Ostervald said it should be read with attention, without passion disordering the heart and with deliberation or unhurriedly. Reading the Bible frequently and diligently allowed for more meditation. The Bible was spiritual food and should be taken daily. In reading, keep in mind the designs of the writers and avoid perverting the texts of Scripture. For example, there are speeches of the wicked included in Scripture, but these are not to be followed. Consider what is useful for instruction. We are to be doers of the Word, not mere observers, so we must consider how the Scriptures can excite us to piety. God's Word must be obeyed more than personal passions or inclinations; it should be read with submission and obedience. Read Scripture prayerfully, with a love of truth and virtue.

Philip Doddridge, an English nonconformist who lived from 1702-1751 was a preacher, hymn writer, and author of the influential *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, a work instrumental in the salvation of statesman William Wilberforce. His *Family Expositor and Version of the New Testament* was actually a paraphrase. The Gospels were harmonized and published as a harmony, rather than in individual books. Critical notes explaining the text were at the bottom of the page, and at the end of each section were notes on "Improvement," or practical application. The first American edition of the *Family Expositor* was published in 1833, over 90 years after the work was first published in England. The American edition included an introduction by the American theologian Moses Stuart, professor of sacred literature at Andover Seminary, and a memoir of the author by N.W. Fisher, professor of Greek at Amherst.³²

³² *English Bible in America*, 26, 125; "Doddridge, Philip," *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, vol. III, 464; *The Family Expositor; or a Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament: With Critical Notes and a Practical Improvement to each Section*. By Philip Doddridge, D.D. American Edition. With a Memoir of the author by N. W. Fiske, professor of Greek and Belles Lettres in Amherst

John Q. Adams mentioned Doddridge's work in a letter he wrote to his son Charles Francis:

In your letter of the 18th January to your mother, you mentioned that you read to your aunt a chapter of the Bible or a section of Doddridge's *Annotations* every evening. This information gave me real pleasure; for so great is my veneration for the Bible, and so strong my belief, that when duly read and meditated on, it is of all books in the world, that which contributes most to make men good, wise and happy – that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more steadily they pursue the practice of reading it throughout their lives, the more lively and confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country, respectable members of society and a real blessing to their parents...³³

Interestingly, this letter was written in 1811, over twenty years before the *Family Expositor* was published in America, showing that English printings of bibles had a ready market in America in the early 19th century. Undoubtedly the reason many American printers reprinted English annotated bibles was because they were aware of the ready market such works already had.

John Brown's Self-Interpreting Bible was one of the most long-lived of the early American annotated bibles. Brown, who lived from 1722-1787, was the orphaned son of a weaver in Abernathy, Scotland. He taught himself Latin and Greek while keeping sheep and later taught himself Hebrew. In fact, for a period of time, one minister spread the suspicion of witchcraft against Brown for his learning these languages when he had little formal schooling. Brown studied for the ministry, came to Haddington in 1751 and remained there until his death 36 years later. In his numerous writings, he sought to be practical and helpful to people who wanted to know the Scripture, but had not the time or skill for deep, personal investigations for themselves.³⁴

Brown's Self-Interpreting Bible was first published in 1778 in Edinburgh. In his own inimitable way, David Daniell commented on the title of this bible:

College; and an Introductory Essay, by Moses Stuart, professor of Sacred Literature in the, Theological Seminary at Andover. With a Portrait, engraved from an Original Picture at picture in Wymondley house. Amherst: S. & C Adams, and L. Boltwood, 1834.

³³ James L. Allen. *Letters of John Quincy Adams to his Son on the Bible and Its Teachings*, 1850, 621.

³⁴ "Memoir of John Brown," *New Self-Interpreting Bible Library*. 1914, 14; A.T. Robertson. *The Minister and His Greek New Testament*, 1923, 103-108; "John brown of Haddington," *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, 277.

In some modern Testaments and Bibles the commentaries, annotation, even translation (many of them paraphrase) are often directed in slant. They will be bought, the publishers hope, for personal, even solipsistic, reasons. There are Bibles and testaments for the various stages of marriage and break-up, for the first year of divorce, for older women, for those suffering business failure, for those in therapy, for everyone looking for a quick fix of Personal Truth. Niche marketing must surely be a slippery slope.

It was not like that as the American nation was formed, when ‘Self-Interpreting’ meant interpretation for oneself, not interpretation of oneself.³⁵

The first American printing of Brown’s Bible was a folio edition published in New York in 1792, with George Washington listed at the head of the subscriber’s list. This subscription edition was published in 40 numbers in a period of 2 years.

Brown’s Self-Interpreting Bible went through at least 26 American editions, with the New Testament being last published in the 1920’s. Later editions included expansions and additions by later Biblical scholars. A history could be written on the illustrations included in this bible over the years, and one can’t help but wonder what John Brown would have thought about their inclusion. The frontispiece of the first American edition pictured Columbia as a lady with an Indian headdress. In her left hand she holds the Constitution; with her right hand she receives the Bible from Peace, kneeling before her. The names of American patriots were written on a liberty tree behind her.³⁶ In this way, America became part of the biblical world. The 1806 edition had 24 plates, several of which were quite brutal. One showed Joab stabbing Abner, with little cherubs above acting out the murder, above a tragic mask. Another showed the assassination of Benhadad by Hazael. The 1822 New York folio had for its frontispiece a very licentious picture of David spying on Bathsheba. As Dr. Daniell wondered, “How can that disreputable incident with its shabby consequences be thought for a moment to represent the content of God’s saving Word?”³⁷ An 1836 printing had a much more appropriate frontispiece, showing Moses

³⁵ *Bible in English*, 601.

³⁶ *The Self Interpreting Bible*, Containing, The Sacred of the Old and New Testaments. By the late Reverend John Brown, Minister of Gospel at Haddington. New York: Hodge and Campbell, 1792. All quotes of the *Self-Interpreting Bible* are taken from this edition.

³⁷ *The Bible in English*, 602.

pointing to Christ carrying the cross with Deuteronomy 18:15, “unto him ye shall listen.” The illustrations of the 1896 and last edition, which continued to be published until 1908, no longer included such questionable illustrations, but rather included “over four hundred Photographs Showing the Places of the Bible events as they appear today.”³⁸

Brown’s bible included explanatory notes placed at the bottom of the page with the scriptural text above. These notes, focusing primarily on translation issues, grammar or historical background, were primarily to make the text more understandable. The notes for each section were followed by “reflections,” which applied the Scripture to the heart. Throughout his work Brown emphasized that the goal of Scripture was to promote holiness and virtue and to glorify God. Dates and Scripture cross-references were placed in the margin. Brown himself believed these Scriptural references were the most important part of his bible. In his introduction he wrote:

as every Protestant must allow the scripture itself to be its own best interpreter...the uncommon collection of Parallel Scriptures, such as is not to be found anywhere else that I know of, has formed the most laborious, and will, to the diligent peruser, be found by far the most valuable, part of the work...this itself is a harmony of Scripture, a Concordance and a large commentary more certain than any dictates of man...I can truly say, that my labor, in collecting the parallel texts in this work, has afforded me much more Pleasant Insight into the oracles of God than all the numerous commentaries which I ever perused.

Brown firmly believed that Scripture was the best interpreter of Scripture:

The inexpressible advantage which attends it will infinitely more than compensate the toil. Herein the serious inquirer has the Spirit of God for his director, the lovely oracles of God for his commentary. He has the pleasure of discovering the truth for himself in God’s own light. And the discovery which he thus makes, by humbly searching the Scriptures, is inexpressibly more agreeable than merely to have met with it at random in some commentator. Being acquired by care and labour, it generally fixes itself much more firmly in the mind, And, while we are thus occupied in comparing the several texts, we may humbly expect that the Holy Ghost will illuminate all with his glory, and apply all to the heart.

³⁸ *English Bible in America*, 320, 9, 283-284, 290; *Bible in English*, 600-603.

John Brown's Introduction, consisting of 27 folio pages, discussed in some depth the divine authority of Scripture, the rules for understanding Scripture, and the relationship of Christianity to the Jewish laws. In addition, he gave an overview of the geography and history of nations, including a history of the church from its earliest days, through the middle ages and Reformation. He assured his readers that the Turks and the anti-Christ, the chief opponents of Christianity, will finally be extirpated and the millennium be ushered in, either in 1866 or 2016. He thus outlined a sweeping view of history which included his own day and beyond.

In his treatment of the divine authority of Scripture, Brown simply presented the history of the Scriptures and the evidences for their truthfulness, using arguments similar to arguments we have seen in earlier supplementary material. Brown also carefully elaborated on how the reader should read and understand Scripture. Reading the Bible was not simply an intellectual exercise but a spiritual one. The reader should begin with prayer that the Holy Spirit would apply the Scripture to his heart. The Scriptures should be searched earnestly with self-denial to know the power of God in them: "A deep sense of our ignorance, and of our absolute need of Scripture influence, must animate us to the earnest study of knowledge. He, who thinks that of himself he knows divine things to any purpose Knoweth nothing as he ought to know – only with the lowly is wisdom." Practice and application should be the end of any bible study. It is the keeping of commandments, not simply the reading of them, that is important.

Readers should proceed from the simplest to the more difficult, from the historical Old Testament to the more doctrinal New Testament. Each Scripture must be understood within the scope of the book within which it lies, whether it is history, poetry, or prophecy. Each Scripture must also be understood within the general plan of the revealed truth; an overview of the main outlines of histories, doctrines, and prophecies was important. Brown encouraged the reader not just to consider the abstract

meaning of a text, but how the spirit of God intended it in a particular connection. For example, the glory of redeeming grace can best be understood in connection with abounding sin; man's wickedness is acting against God. How words were joined together would help the reader understand these connections; notice words like "and," "then," "therefore," "because," "in," "to," and "through." Finally, Christ Jesus was the end and subject of all Scripture, and the reader should look for Him there.

An 1874 American revision of Brown's Bible, with many additional notes, is quite interesting. It includes the revision completed by Revs. Cooke and Porter, two Irish Presbyterians, as well as several Americans, including C.P. Krauth, an Evangelical Lutheran; Rev. C.M. Butler, an Episcopalian and chaplain of the U.S. Senate; and Rev. Alfred Nevin, a Presbyterian. As were the bibles of Ostervald, Doddridge, and Scott, this was a bible not marked by denominational peculiarities, but acceptable to the broader Protestant evangelical faith dominant in 19th century American.

Thomas Scott's Family Bible was the most popular of the annotated bibles in the 19th century. Thomas Scott's commentary was much more popular in 19th century America than was Matthew Henry's, though the two were similar in format and style. Thomas Scott, who lived from 1747-1821, was a Unitarian priest who converted to Trinitarian faith through the influence of John Newton and the study of the Scriptures themselves. This conversion led to the publication of his first book, *The Force of Truth* in 1779, describing his conversion, itself an argument against Unitarianism. Scott in turn was influential in the conversion of William Cowper, the poet and fellow-hymnwriter with Newton. Scott was often cited as especially able to counter the Unitarian arguments of the day. His *The Holy Bible with Notes*, first published in 174 weekly numbers between 1788 and 1792, was long considered the model Family Bible. The first American edition was published in 1804. Between 1808-1819, 25, 250 copies were sold in the United States, and the commentary continued to be printed in its own right into the 1870's. In American homes it stood right up there with the classics. When Harriet Beecher Stowe

described a New England home in her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she wrote of the respectable old book case with its glass doors in the "keeping room" "where Rollin's History, Milton's Paradise Lost, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and Scott's Family Bible, stand side by side in decorous order, with multitudes of other books, equally solemn and respectable."³⁹ Even Thomas Jefferson had a set of Scott's Family Bible, which is now in the Library of Congress as part of Jefferson's original gift to the Library. However, if Jefferson ever read the work, Scott's arguments against Unitarianism apparently had no effect on him.⁴⁰

Building upon Doddridge and Brown, Scott believed the Scripture was its own best interpreter. He did not want to press Scripture into some pre-established theological system. Scott's bible did not include the many tables and charts found in many family bibles of the day. A general preface and prologue to each book set the Bible and each book in a wider context. Marginal notes concerned language and translation issues and pertinent Scripture references. The Scripture itself was at the top of the page with expository/explanatory notes at the bottom of the page and "Practical Observations" at the end of each chapter.⁴¹

As in the earlier works, Scott's introduction explained the divine inspiration of Scripture and how the Scripture was to be received. He argued against those who said man could look inward and by his own reason develop a moral religion. Those who rejected Christianity in favor of a rationalistic religion actually had borrowed many of their ideas from Christianity rather than developing them from innate reason. Their deistic religion could be found only in places where Christianity had first existed. Scott contended that religion without Scripture was ignorant of God's glory and man's sin.

³⁹ Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852, 226.

⁴⁰ *Bible in English*, 632-635; *English Bible in America*, 20-21, 26, 31, 33, 43, 48-49, 77, 90, 96, 170, 173; "Scott, Thomas," *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* Vol. 11, 303.

⁴¹ *The Holy Bible*, Containing the Old and New Testaments according to the Authorized Versions, with Original Notes, Practical Observations, and Copious Marginal References. By Thomas Scott, Rector of Aston Sandford, Bucks. The First American, from the Second London Edition, Improved and Enlarged. Philadelphia: Printed by and for William W. Woodward, 1804.

In his arguments for the divine inspiration of Scripture, Scott had four emphases not found in earlier bibles. First, he said the very scope of prophecies made by many different writers over many centuries and later being fulfilled spoke of inspiration. These prophecies outlined the history of the world and showed the grand design of Providence. Second, the state of the world and the nature of man as described in Scripture was not what the unaided mind, apart from revelation, would have described. The Gospels show Jesus in perfect humanity, in ways that could not have been imagined by man himself. The very creation of the character of Jesus defies infidelity. Here Scott seemed to be arguing against those Deists and Unitarians, such as Thomas Jefferson, who wished to acknowledge the nobility of Jesus without accepting His divinity or the authority and authenticity of Scriptures. Third, Jesus quoted from the Old Testament as the Word of God. Was He deluding the people? Scott discussed over 20 such quotes by Jesus, from the time of Jesus' temptation to his talks with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. If Jesus accepted the Old Testament as Scripture and He is indeed a good, moral example, shouldn't we accept the Scripture? Finally, that lives are transformed by Scripture, was evidence of divine inspiration. The Bible had an inward testimony of truth on the human soul.

In his treatment of how the divine revelation was to be received, Scott discussed epistemology in a way the simple farmer on the American frontier could have understood. Ultimately, the Bible was to be received by faith, but faith was not contrary to reason. Faith was like a telescope that enabled men and women to see more clearly than before. Pure, natural religion was impossible because of man's wicked heart. Those who denied Scripture except when it accorded with their reason were not Christian. Infidelity asserted doctrinal truth was not important, but only arrogance denied the truth of God's Word. Revelation was important for true holiness, in contrast with pharisaical morality.

In summary, Scott stated that he compiled his Family Bible with four purposes in mind: to enable the reader to store his understanding with the knowledge of divine truth; to awake and direct the

conscience and improve the heart; to promote comfort and truthfulness of the true Christian; and to assist the young student of divinity.

The bibles we have been considering were often called “Family Bibles.” They were usually quartos, sometimes folios, which were designed to be used in daily family worship. Heirs of the Reformation recognized that the family, along with the church and the state, was the key foundation institution of society. As historian Edmund Morgan wrote in his work *The Puritan Family*, “If the family failed to teach its members properly, neither the state nor the church could be expected to accomplish much.”⁴² The family was a little church, with the father as its bishop. Every morning and evening the father was expected to lead in family worship; religion was not just a Sunday affair. In the 19th century, numerous books were written to encourage Family Worship, and a general pattern developed in many Protestant families of reading the Old Testament together in the morning and chapters from the New Testament at night. Annotated bibles were especially designed with such family worship in mind.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, American bibles continued to borrow from those produced in England. The *Polyglott Bible*, the *Comprehensive Commentary*, the *Cottage Bible*, and the *Devotional Family Bible* all were printed in England before America. Some American printings included revisions by American ministers, who collated notes of stalwart commentators such as Scott, Doddridge, Brown, and Henry. Methodist publishers often included Adam Clarke’s notes and commentaries, providing a more Arminian perspective from the prevailing Calvinism. Most of the various annotated bibles were designed to assist the common reader, with the help of the Holy Spirit, understand the Word of God, God’s best gift to men. The elucidating notes helped the reader understand the language, translation questions, historical background and geography of the Bible. Information from the newest archaeological discoveries began to be included in bibles at the end of the

century, along with more accurate and less imaginative illustrations of places and artifacts than those in bibles published earlier in the century.

By the end of the 19th century, Family Bibles had become huge affairs, some weighing fifteen pounds or more. Some had elaborately carved covers with huge metal clasps, as if they were locking a treasure for security. They included much of the supplementary material we have already reviewed and more, including Bible dictionaries, again authored by British scholars. Family bibles were prominently displayed in the parlor. While in our 21st century homes we are concerned about where to build the Entertainment Center, at the end of the 19th century, decorative art books included patterns for tables and lecterns on which to place the Family Bible.⁴³

While the supplementary material in 19th century American bibles was overwhelmingly written by British or European scholars, there are a few distinctively American contributions which need to be noticed. *The Collateral Bible*, printed in 1826, was a three volume work that printed the complete texts of Scriptural references following each verse of Scriptural text. In this way, one could read the Bible and read the cross-referenced Scriptures without having to leaf through to find the various passages of Scripture. For example, Genesis 1:3, “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” was followed by the following quoted references in smaller print:

Psalm xxxiii.9, “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

Matt. viii.3. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

John xi.43. And, when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth. 44. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his faces was about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

2 Cor. iv.6. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁴² Edmund S. Morgan. *The Puritan Family*. New York: Harper and Row, 1966, 139.

⁴³ Colleen McDannell. *Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900*. Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1994; *American Bible*, 76-88.

Eph. v. 14. Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Without human commentary, simply by quoting Scripture itself, several themes from Genesis 1:3 are presented: the power of God to create simply by his spoken word; Jesus' word has the same power as God's word, bringing healing and even restoring life itself; God's creation of light mirrors the new spiritual creation He brings to our hearts through Jesus Christ; Christ gives us light and awakens us from spiritual death. Reading through an entire chapter in this way deepens one's understanding and appreciation of the unity of the Bible.

The *Collateral Bible* was a completely American production, by Presbyterians William McCorkle and E.S. Ely, and Episcopalian G.T. Bedell.⁴⁴ Its very method followed a principle found in many of the annotated bibles: Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture.

One of the unique and distinctive characteristics of American Christianity is the growth of denominations. Many denominations were spawned in the religious ferment of 19th century America. Among those were the Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ denominations, arising out of the ministry of Alexander Campbell, who lived from 1788 to 1866. Campbell began his Christian ministry as a Presbyterian, became a Baptist, and finally broke with all denominations as he sought to restore the church to its original, first century principles. In 1828 he published his "Living Oracles" or the *Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, commonly called the New Testament*. In America this translation sold more than any other rival to the King James Version until the revision of 1901. Campbell relied strongly on earlier translations by the British scholars George Campbell, James MacKnight, and Philip Doddridge, though he made some changes to fit his distinctive beliefs. Most

⁴⁴ *The Collateral Bible, or a Key to the Holy Scriptures; in Which All the Corresponding Texts are Brought Together Into One View, and Arranged in a Familiar and Easy Manner.* By William M'Corkle, assisted by the Rev. E.S. Ely, D.D. and the Rev. G.T. Bedell. Philadelphia: Samuel Bradford; New York: E. Bliss and E. White 1826. Scriptures on the title page of this work emphasized the importance of Scriptures: Matthew 22:29; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; I Corinthians 2:13; Luke 24:27, 32; Hab. 2:14.

notably, “baptism” was replaced with “immersion.” Campbell also modernized the language, removing the “th” from the verbs, and wrote the text across the page in paragraphs, rather than in the traditional two columns. Campbell included many of the tables included in earlier bibles published in America that helped explain the customs, history, and geography of the Bible. Campbell himself wrote 47 pages of “Critical Notes” and further helps. He emphasized that the Scriptures should be understood as they were understood by the first readers, in a day when current denominational and doctrinal squabbles were not present. Scripture must be understood by itself, without comment or tradition.⁴⁵

In The Bible in America Museum Collection, an 1832 edition of Campbell’s Testament is most interesting because of notes and comments written in it. On the title page, next to Campbell’s name, is written “big head.” A sheet of paper sewn in later in the bible said Campbell left the Baptists in Pennsylvania to escape being accused of heresy. He then united with Rigdon and Bennet, who went on to become Mormons. Another comment, among many through the copy says, “60 pages for Introduction and 100 pages above Appendix and addenda – 160 pages of comment in print besides a monthly pamphlet – and constant teaching – and talk of no comment! What unblushing impudence!”

The Protestant consensus of 19th century America was that the Bible was essential to a true education, and several Americans published bibles especially for the use in schools. Time will not permit a detailed discussion of the various educational settings of common schools, Sabbath schools, or urban schools in which the Bible was used, but a brief look at the bibles themselves is useful. Hervey Wilbur (1787-1852), a Congregational minister in Massachusetts, was a pioneer in establishing Bible classes and probably the first in the country to compile and publish a Bible-class textbook. In 1828 he

⁴⁵ *Bible in English*, 648; “Campbell, Alexander,” Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Brue L. Shelley, and Harry Stout, eds. *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Illinois. Intervarsity Press, 1990, 214-215; *English Bible in America*, 159. *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, Commonly Styled the New Testament*, Translated from the Original Greek, by George Campbell, James MacKnight and Philip Doddridge, Doctors of the Church of Scotland. With Prefaces to the Historical and Epistolary Books, and an Appendix, containing Critical Notes and Various Translations of Difficult Passages. Second Edition. Bethany, Brooke Co., Va.: Alexander Campbell., 1828; *The New Testament*. By A. Campbell. Third edition, Revised and enlarged. Bethany, Brooke County, Va.: Alexander Campbell, 1832.

published his *Reference Bible*. Supplemental materials covered chronological, historical, geographical, as well as doctrinal topics:

With References and a Key Sheet of Questions, Geographical, Historical Doctrinal, Practical, and Experimental; Accompanied with Valuable Chronological Harmonies of both Testaments; correct and elegant Maps, and highly useful Tables of Scripture Names, Scripture Geography, Scripture Chronology, Scripture References, &c. whole designed to Facilitate the Acquisition of Scriptural Knowledge In Bible Classes, Sunday schools, and Private Families.⁴⁶

This indeed was a bible to be studied! Most creative and useful was Wilbur's sheet of lettered questions. This was a sheet that unfolded at the back of the bible and could be left open and referred to as the bible was read. Each bible verse was marked with a small letter which corresponded to one of the questions on the sheet. As the student read the bible, the corresponding questions for each verse prompted him to think more carefully about what he was reading, much like inductive Bible studies today. Some questions Wilbur included were the following:

- What ANALOGIES between sensible and spiritual things may here be traced?
- What PROPHECY is here accomplished? Where is it found? How many years had it been written?
- What trait of moral CHARACTER is here given? Is it morally good or evil? Does it belong to a natural, or to a renewed state? What advantages attended it?
- What EVANGELICAL EXPERIENCE or what EXHORTATION is here given?
- What GEOGRAPHICAL information is known of this country, province, city, or river, etc.?
- What doctrinal TRUTH is here inculcated? Is it directly or indirectly taught? How illustrated? How applied? What practical influence should it have?

⁴⁶ *The Reference Bible*, Containing an Accurate Copy of the Common English Version of the Old and New Testaments: With References and a Key Sheet of Questions, Geographical, Historical Doctrinal, Practical, and Experimental; Accompanied with Valuable Chronological Harmonies of both Testaments; correct and elegant Maps, and highly useful Tables of Scripture Names, Scripture Geography, Scripture Chronology, Scripture References, &c. whole designed to Facilitate the Acquisition of Scriptural Knowledge In Bible Classes, Sunday schools, and Private Families. By Hervey Wilbur, A.M. Fourth Edition. Boston: Published by Cummings, Hilliard & Co. and Crocker and Brewster; also by the American Sunday School Union, Philadelphia. Power Press. J.G. Rogers & Co., 1826; *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*: Translated out of the Original Greek and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised; With References and a Key Sheet of Questions; Historical, Doctrinal and Practical. By Hervey Wilbur. Second Edition. Stereotyped by T. H. and C. Carter. Boston: Cummings, Hilliard & Co., 1823; "Wilbur, Hervey" *Appleton's Encyclopedia*, ed. James Grant Wilson and John Fiske. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1887-1889, vol. 6.

The supplemental material in Wilbur's *Reference Bible*, as with much of the supplemental material in the quarto Family Bibles, was designed to encourage people to actually read, interact with, and understand the Bible for themselves.

The bulk of the supplemental material added to 19th century American bibles was from the writings and studies of leading British and European evangelicals of previous centuries, men of largely Puritan/Calvinistic theology as well as practical Christianity. The supplements helped the common reader understand better the basic content of the Bible, the chronology and time of the Bible's events, and the historical and geographical setting of the Bible. The material devoted to Christian evidences helped the reader understand the origin of the Bible itself and counter the attacks on the Bible's authenticity and authority made by skeptics, Unitarians, and higher critics. Americans isolated on the frontier, far from a church or preachers, could still sit at the feet of godly pastors by reading many of the supplements and commentaries in their bibles, often the only book they had. What they read in their bibles shaped their outlook on life. Historian T.R. Fehrenbach's description of the Bible's influence on 19th century Texans is equally true of many 19th century Americans:

The historical role of the English Bible in this Texas has increasingly been overlooked. But the King James Version afforded this stultified civilization on the fringes of the 19th century Western world with a great part of the basic culture it required. It gave the frontier farmer ... a basic folklore, philosophy and literature. It was, in fact, almost the only literature most families possessed.

The Old Testament fitted easily into the 19th century Texas world. Its revelations of the human condition were held, even by the nonreligious, to be entirely valid and timelessly true. The young Texan read of evil that was ancient and ever-present, requiring eternal discipline of man; he learned of false prophets and lying sycophants, of licentious Jezebels and foolish kings, of mighty warriors and wise men. He absorbed an unflattering impression of such intellectual tribes as Scribes and Pharisees. And although few could articulate it or explain it, Texans gained a timeless portrait of man's world, of the rise and fall of people, of bondage and deliverance, of God's patience and wrath, and man's enduring inhumanity to man. Visitors were often surprised to find Texans, who had no apparent civilization, able to strip vanities and euphoric philosophies from better-educated men. As a cultural, folkloric instrument, the Holy Bible played its part, in a way no official history or intellectually fabricated philosophy ever could.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ T.R. Fehrenbach. *Lone Star*. New York: American Legacy Press, 1983, c. 1968, 304.

Ultimately the goal in Bible reading, and the supplements beyond the Scripture or the Bible's sacred pages, was a closer relationship with the God of the Bible, with the Living Word. The 19th century American hymn "Break Thou the Bread of Life" expressed this goal and desire well. Though often used as communion hymn today, the song was originally written in 1877 to be sung before Bible studies at Chatauqua events. The hymn includes a prayer that was in the hearts of many Bible-reading Americans of the 19th century:

Beyond the sacred page
I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee,
O Living Word!

Show me the truth concealed
Within Thy Word,
And in Thy book revealed
I see the Lord.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Kenneth W. Osbeck. *Amazing Grace*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publication, 1990, 235.