

THE
Bible
IN
America™
M U S E U M
N E W S L E T T E R

Houston Baptist University

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Old Abe and the Bible



PRESIDENT'S DAY is a good time to examine the faith of one of America's greatest Presidents, Abraham Lincoln. Every school child learns of Lincoln's surprising rise to the Presidency from his humble, log-cabin child-hood. Often, however, little is said about the importance of the Bible in shaping Lincoln's character and ideas.

Lincoln's early life coincided with the period of the Second Great Awakening, the early 19th century revival which placed a Christian stamp on the young American republic. The Bible, along with *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and Aesop's *Fables* was one of the few books the Lincoln family owned. Young Abe learned to read from the Bible, and its phrases became part of his language. The Lincoln family Bible (now preserved at the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site) included notes by the Rev. J. Ostervald, an 18th century pastor of a Swiss Reformed Church in Switzerland. These notes included notes from the Geneva Bible, which the pilgrims brought to the New World in 1620. Ostervald's notes were very popular in America and are found in several of the Bibles in the Bible in America Museum.

Though Lincoln's parents and sister Sarah joined the separatist Baptist church, Abe never joined a church. He was put off by the competition and bickering among the various denominations. When Lincoln moved to New Salem, Illinois as a young man, the small town had a population of 300. There Lincoln found several varieties of Baptists as well as Methodists, Cumberland Presbyterians, and Campbellites, all competing with each other. Lincoln decided to join a group of skeptics instead. For several years he was an agnostic and questioned Christianity's truthfulness. James Smith, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, in 1843 published *The Christian Defense* examining and refuting attacks on the credibility of Scripture. Reading this book helped Lincoln throw off his skepticism and convinced him of the truth of Christianity.

When he was elected President, Lincoln looked for a church in Washington, D.C. where the minister preached the gospel, not politics. He and Mary Todd attended New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, pastored by Phineas Densmore Gurley, a Princeton graduate. Though Lincoln never joined the church, Gurley ministered the Word to the President throughout the national trauma of the Civil War and the Lincolns' personal loss of their little son Willie. Gurley's sermon at Willie's funeral sought to comfort Abe and Mary with a Biblical view of the Providence of God. Gurley encouraged the Lincolns to "bow in His presence with an humble and teachable spirit; only let us be still and know that He is God."

Lincoln began attending the midweek evening prayer service in addition to Sunday worship, and he grappled with the meaning of the Civil War from God's perspective. His theological reflections found expression in his Second Inaugural Address, delivered 41 days before his assassination and death. The Second Inaugural, which is inscribed on the walls of the Lincoln Memorial, became Lincoln's last will and testament for the nation. The reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune* noted that after the brief six minute address, there was a stillness over the crowd, "The address seemed more like a sermon than a state paper." The Second Inaugural gives Lincoln's theological, not political, reflections of the war. Lincoln recognized that the Bible was an authoritative book from God to both North and South, and he built his address around four passages of Scripture: Genesis 3:19; Matthew 7:1; 18:7; and Psalm 19:9. Because he recognized God was working out His own purposes in the war, Lincoln concluded his speech not by calling his listeners to get behind the Northern war effort, but to imitate the ways of God: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan – to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

Noted Scholar to Speak on Bible in America as part of the A.O. Collins Lecture Series

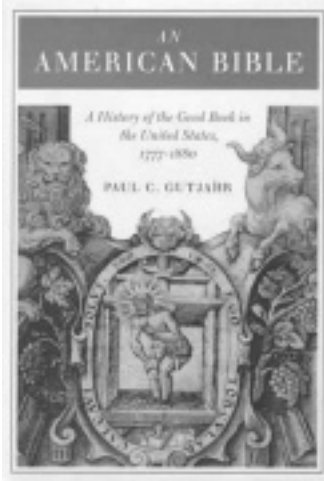


Dr. A.O. Collins was part of the original faculty at HBU and chaired the Department of Christianity and Philosophy from 1977 until his retirement in 1991. In 1989, David Campbell initiated funding for lectures to be named in Dr. Collins' honor.

Generous gifts from L.W.

and Rosemary Laird have assisted funding the lectures. The lectures provide an opportunity for recognized scholars to address the University community on the subjects of theology, religious studies or philosophy. This year's lectures will be given by Dr. Paul Gutjahr.

Paul Gutjahr, author of *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States*, *Illuminating Letters: Typography and Literary Interpretation*, and *Popular American Literature*, will present this year's A.O. Collins lectures April 1-2.



Dr. Gutjahr is Associate Professor of English, American Studies and Religious Studies at Indiana University. He favors an interdisciplinary approach in his specialty study of the history of publishing and literacy in the United States. His interest has led him to write extensively on not only the Bible but popular Christian fiction, from *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ to Left Behind*.

Dr. Gutjahr will speak at the Thursday convocation, April 1 at 10 a.m. in Sharp gym. He also will speak Thursday evening at 8 p.m. in Mabee Theater and Friday, April 2 at 9:30 a.m. in Mabee Theater. He will be at the **Bible in America Museum** Thursday, April 1, from 1:30-3:00 to comment on highlights of the Museum's collection. The public is invited to these lectures and discussions. Contact Dr. David Capes, Chair of the Department of Christianity and Philosophy, 281-649-3135 for more information on Dr. Gutjahr's time at HBU or about contributing toward the endowment of the A.O. Collins Lectures.

RECENT DONATIONS TO THE BIBLE IN AMERICA MUSEUM

- A facsimile reprint of Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible, published in 1534. This Bible is in two volumes and is beautifully illustrated with colored engravings by L. Cranach.
- An 1837 American reprint of William Tyndale's New Testament.
- *Revolve* – Thomas Nelsons' magazine format New Testament for teenage girls.
- *Lincoln's Use of the Bible* by S. Trevenia Jackson, 1909.
- Franklin Mint edition of the *Thomason Medallion Bible*.

“A man's word is a little sound, that flies into the air, and soon vanishes; but the Word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, greater than death and hell, for it forms part of the power of God, and endures everlastingly ... The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me.”

— Martin Luther

Watch our Website

The Bible in America Museum's website is growing. Some of the additions being made to the website include Highlights from the Collection; Reprints from the Collection, including prefaces from many of the earliest English Bibles, study material added to many of the early Bibles, and an 1861 Soldier's Bible. A feature that will certainly become a favorite is the "Bible's Influence and Impact." It includes current English words first printed in English Bible translations and a selection of quotes from American leaders on the Bible's importance. A catalog of the museum's collection will also be available. The website's address is www.hbu.edu/bia.

Advice on Christian Marriage

The **Bible in America Museum's** collection includes an **1801 quarto Bible** printed by the Philadelphia printer Matthew Carey. Among the supplements in the Bible is "A Clergyman's Address to Married Persons at the Altar." This supplement is included in a number of other 19th century Bible's as well. With Valentine's Day near and spring coming soon, we print part of the advice here:



The duties between man and wife are various and important. They suppose the union not of *persons* only, but also and principally of *affections*. It is not joining of *hands*, but also of *hearts*, which constitutes marriage in the sight of God. This alone brings and preserves the sexes together, and both sanctifies and perfects this most solemn and sacred connection ...

You, who are the husband, must treat your wife with delicacy and discretion. Nothing in nature is so *endearing*, so *winning*, so *captivating*, as *tenderness*; nothing creates aversion so soon, so strong, so inveterate, as rudeness, indifference, or disrespect. She is the weaker vessel, and depends on you for protection and comfort, in all her difficulties. For *your sake* she has left her friends, her connections, and all the world, and should she meet with a tyrant instead of a lover, she may repent of this day as long as she lives. Never incense or insult her; and as you wish to keep your own temper and peace, ruffle not her's: ... Consult your wife, especially on all cases of difficulty; 'tis her *interest* as well as *duty*, to give you the best advice she can. *Never keep her ignorant of your circumstances*: this has been the undoing of millions of families. The wife who deserves the name, *will never fail to economize*, when she knows that her partner's circumstances require it. Be not much uneasy though the world should sometimes think she has her full share of influence. Women of good sense seldom abuse their husband's confidence. And you will see few happy families in which the wife is either a slave or a cypher.

Mutual happiness is your mutual object; yield therefore to one another. *Be ye equally yoked*, is the command of God; let neither seek basely to throw an undue weight on the other's shoulders. Suffer no *interference* from any quarter whatever to interrupt your harmony: you are connected for life. — Nothing can separate your *fate* in this world: O let nothing divide your affections. Regard each other with the fullest confidence; ... There can be no harmony where there is no faith.

A wife should not only love her husband, but on every occasion shew him all the attention in her power. Study by every means to make his home *comfortable* and inviting. *Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also*, and a man's preference, as well as his *heart*, will always be there most, where he has most pleasure. And I'll venture to assert it as a fact incontestable, that he who finds his home a *paradise*, will seldom stroll into the wilderness of this world. While on the other hand, a scolding wife and a hot house have driven many a wretched husband to a tavern, where cards, women, and wine have sealed his own and *the destruction of his family*.

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 the world and the next.



"There is no solid basis for civilization but in the Word of God ... If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity ... If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end."

— Daniel Webster





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“THE BIBLE IS THE BEST GIFT GOD
HAS GIVEN TO MAN. ALL THE GOOD
THAT THE SAVIOR GAVE TO THE
WORLD WAS COMMUNICATED
THROUGH THIS BOOK. BUT FOR IT WE
COULD NOT KNOW RIGHT FROM
WRONG. ALL THE THINGS MOST
DESIRABLE FOR MAN’S WELFARE, HERE
AND HEREAFTER, ARE TO BE
PORTRAYED IN IT.”

— ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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

What’s in a Name?

Wherever the Bible’s influence spreads, people begin naming their children after Bible characters. Studies have been made which show that after the Reformation in England, Anglo-Saxon and Norman names such as William and Katherine, began to decline in usage. When the Bible became more available to the people, they used the Bible as a kind of baby-naming book; and Biblical names, such as Jonathan and Abigail, increased. The Puritans in early America were famous for their Biblical-sounding names. Not only did they use names of Biblical characters, but character traits themselves – Charity, Grace, Faith, Patience, Humility. More than one child was given the name of “Fight-the-good-fight-of-faith!” While we might not go that far today, Biblical names are still popular, and a study of names can become quite interesting. The Social Security’s Office of the Chief Actuary has a record of names used in the United States dating back to the 1880’s (www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/). Look at the top 50 names for both boys and girls of the 1990’s and find those that are from the Bible. The first three people who send the most accurate list to the Bible in America Museum will receive a copy of the booklet *The Bible in America*. Send your list to the Bible in America Museum, 7502 Fondren Rd. Houston, TX 77074-3298 or e-mail dseverance@hbu.edu by April 1, 2004.

Visit the Bible in America Museum

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR ADMISSION.

- Open Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Thursdays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Appointments for tours at other times may be made by calling 281-649-3287 or emailing: 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.