

Bible IN America™

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Amazing Grace - Coming to a Theater Near You

February 23, *Amazing Grace*, a new motion picture, will open at theaters throughout the country. This historical drama of Englishman William Wilberforce's successful 40 year campaign in Parliament to abolish slavery is timed to coincide with the anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in England in 1807. Wilberforce's courageous convictions and unwavering perseverance in the face of endless difficulties are examples and challenges to our times.



Ioan Gruffudd plays William Wilberforce in the upcoming film *Amazing Grace*

The film excellently portrays John Newton's influence in encouraging Wilberforce to use his political position as a Member of Parliament to work for abolition. Newton, a leading London minister, was a former slave trader himself whose life was transformed by his faith in Jesus Christ. Newton's hymn, "Amazing Grace," is not only the film's title but also an important theme in William Wilberforce's own Christian life.

Born August 24, 1759 to wealth and privilege in Hull, England, Wilberforce's rich inheritance enabled him to enjoy a life of ease, hobnobbing with the social elite of his day. In 1780, at the young age of 21, he

won a seat in Parliament; in 1787 he won a seat to represent the influential district of Yorkshire, which he represented for fifty years. When Parliament was not in session, Wilberforce traveled in style throughout Europe. In 1784, he asked Isaac Milner, a friend from childhood and a tutor at Queen's College, to accompany him, his mother, and sister to the French Riviera.



William Wilberforce
(1759-1833)

Milner was a committed Christian, and he and Wilberforce talked for hours about the nature of the Christian faith. Wilberforce read a book during that summer which also deeply affected him – Philip Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. Originally printed in 1745, the *Rise and Progress of Religion* is a Christian classic which continues in print today, as well as being available on the Internet. The edition in the Bible Museum's collection was printed in 1804 in Massachusetts.

Doddridge's concern was that there were many moral people in the country who were nominally Christian, but whose lives were not lived to please God or with any sense of obligation to God reflected in their conduct.

The first half of *Rise and Progress* considered the rise of religion in the soul, particularly focusing on the awakening of a sense of sin, a stripping away of pride, a condemnation for sin, the goodness of salvation by Christ, and the soul's humble and earnest application to Christ for mercy. The second half of the book examined how an individual was transformed to radiate Christ in his or her character. Doddridge

encouraged his readers to look for help to the Spirit of God, to dedicate one's life to God, and to participate in church communion. He provided Biblical counsel for resisting temptation, avoiding spiritual decay, trusting God in difficulties, growing in grace, living a useful life, and honoring God even in death. True religion, rather than just nominal religion, was "such a sense of God in the soul, and such a conviction of our obligation to him, and of our dependence on him, as shall engage us to make our great care to conduct ourselves in a manner which we have reason to believe will be pleasing to him."



Philip Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* was instrumental in Wilberforce's conversion and his understanding of the Christian worldview.

By the time Wilberforce came home from the Riviera in February 1785, after reading Doddridge's work as well as the New Testament, Wilberforce had reached an "intellectual assent to the Biblical view of man, God, and Christ." In the following months, this intellectual assent grew into a profound, heartfelt conviction. The Bible became a most beloved book which Wilberforce studied endlessly and learned much of by heart.

At this conversion, or "great change" as he called it, Wilberforce felt contempt for the life of wealth, ease, and luxury he had been living.

Wilberforce considered leaving Parliament, but John Newton encouraged him to use his Parliamentary position for good, working for the abolition of slavery and other moral reforms. Newton wrote Wilberforce, "It is hoped and believed that the Lord has raised you up for the good of His church and for the good of the nation."

October 28, 1787 Wilberforce wrote in his diary, "God Almighty has set before me two great

objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners." By the "Reformation of Manners", Wilberforce meant the reform of the morals of Britain. For Wilberforce, reformation of morals was founded on the doctrines of Christianity found in Scripture, and he worked tirelessly for such a reform during his over fifty years in Parliament.

Throughout his Christian and political life, Wilberforce believed true Christianity, as opposed to just nominal Christianity, was rooted in the Biblical doctrines: "the major and radical defect of these nominal Christians is their forgetfulness of all the distinctive doctrines of the religion which they profess. These are the corruption of human nature, the atonement of the Savior, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. This, then, is the great distinction between the religion of Christ and that of the majority of nominal Christians." This lesson Wilberforce first learned from Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*.

"Let it be remembered that the great characteristic mark of the true Christian is his desire to please God in all his thoughts, words, and actions. This is to take the revealed Word to be the rule of his belief and practice and so 'let his light shine before men' (Matthew 5:16). It is in all things to adorn the doctrine which he professes..."

"Let true Christians ... pray continually for their country at this time of national difficulty. We bear the marks only too plainly of a declining empire. Who can say how intercession before the Governor of the universe may avert for a while our ruin. It may appear before the eyes of the world foolishness for real Christians so to pray, yet we believe from Scripture that God will be disposed to favor the nation to which His servants belong."

"Boldly I must confess that I believe the national difficulties we face result from the decline of religion and morality among us. I must confess equally boldly that my own solid hopes for the well-being of my country depend, not so much on her navies and armies, nor on the wisdom of her rulers, nor on the spirit of her people, as on the persuasion that she still contains many who love and obey the Gospel of Christ. I believe that their prayers may yet prevail."

"In so much of Europe, they have preferred a false philosophy before the lessons of revelation. Infidelity has lifted up her head without shame, and walks broadly in the daytime. Licentiousness and vice prevail without restraint."

"May there be here at least a sanctuary, a land of true faith and piety, where we may still enjoy the blessings of Christianity. May there be here in this nation a place where the name of Christ is still honored and men may see the blessings of faith in Jesus. May the means of religious education and consolation once again be extended to surrounding countries and to the world at large."

~from Wilberforce's *Real Christianity* in 1797. In this work, Wilberforce elaborated on an important theme in Doddridge's *Rise and Progress* – that there are many nominal Christians who are not real Christians, having neglected the Biblical, doctrinal foundations of the Faith.

Coming next issue:

1625th anniversary of Jerome's Vulgate

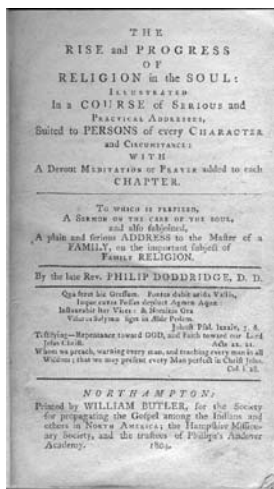
"Make knowledge of the Scripture your love and you will not love the views of the flesh ... I beg you, dear brother, live with them, meditate on them, make them the sole object of your knowledge and inquiries."

~St. Jerome

An Inscription with Important Christian and Patriotic Connections

On a blank page at the front of the Bible Museum's copy of *Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* is an inscription with interesting connections: "This book together with four others of the same kind, being a part of the income of the donation of the late Lt. Gov. Phillips to the town of Andover, are appropriated for the use of the inhabitants within the Abbot School District, to be under the care of Cap. Jon Abbot; each book to be returned to him once in three months at least. Nov. 30 1805."

The Lt. Gov. Phillips mentioned was Samuel Phillips, the founder of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts.



Phillips was an amazing individual who accomplished much during his fifty years. He operated numerous mercantile shops as well as a saw-mill, grist-mill and paper-mill. He was active in politics, serving as a delegate to his state Constitutional Convention, a Judge for 20 years, a State senator, and was elected Lt. Gov. of Massachusetts shortly before his death in 1802.

Most important to Phillips was his interest in education and religion. When a student at Harvard he was envied for his

wealth and treated ill by some students. Samuel wrote his father, "Let me be interested in the Lord and no matter who is against me." This Christian perspective continued throughout his life. Phillips Academy was established with the principle object of promoting "piety and virtue" and preparing students for "the real business of living." Phillips himself believed that "knowledge without goodness is dangerous," and he made certain the students at the Academy were instructed in the Christian religion. He specifically charged the first headmaster to inculcate in the students "the important scripture doctrines ... of the fall of man, the depravity of human nature; the necessity of the atonement ... together with the other important doctrines and duties of the Holy Christian Religion." This was the emphasis found in *Doddridge's Rise and Progress*, which strongly influenced Phillips' personal life, as it did Wilberforce's. In his will, Phillips made provision for a fund for Christian books to be distributed in the community. *Rise and Progress* was specifically listed as one of the books to be made available to the citizens of Andover.

The "Cap. Jon. Abbot" in our book's inscription was in Col. Samuel Johnson's 4th Massachusetts Regiment during the American Revolution. This regiment fought at the Siege of Boston, the battles around New York City, the important Trenton-Princeton victories of 1776-1777, the turning point battle of Saratoga, and at Monmouth.

A Timely Illustration



Curtis made a beautiful rendering of the engraving on his clock.



We received an interesting question from a graduate student at the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture in Delaware. She was studying an 1817 girandole clock made by Lemuel Curtis. The clock had a reverse glass painting which the documentation said was based on a print from Isaiah Thomas' illustrated Bible. The student asked if we could send a copy of the original engraving as well as other Bible engravings, to determine if other decorative pieces might have copied Bible illustrations as well. We discovered that the engraving, of Elisha restoring the Shunamite woman's son to life, was actually from Isaac Collins'

1816 Bible. Lemuel



Recent Acquisitions

From the estate of Peggy Harper Gregory:

- Holy Bible with Canne's marginal notes, Sumner & Goodman, 1845;
- Holy Bible, Holbrook and Fessenden, 1816;
- New Testament, Matthew Carey, 1806;
- Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 1853.

Donated by Steve Frazier:

- Holy Bible, Masonic Bible edition, 1942;
- Family Bible, Heirloom Bible Publishers, 1971;
- New Standard Alphabetically Indexed Bible, 1951 Masonic edition.

Donated by Rev. John Neesley, Lazybrook Baptist church:

- Holy Bible translated from the Latin Vulgate (Rheims-Douay), D. & J. Sadler, & Co., 1871.

Donated by Albert D. Sanders:

- Complete Jewish Bible by David Stern;
- Die Bibel, Martin Luther's translation with illustrations by Matthaeus Merian, 1964.

Donated by Audrey McCall and William J. Standley:

- New Standard Alphabetical Indexed Bible, winner of blue ribbon award at Texas Centennial in Dallas, 1936.

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*Precious Bible! What a treasure
Does the Word of God afford!
All I want for life or pleasure,
Food and medicine, shield and sword;
Let the world account me poor-
Christ and this, I need no more.
~John Newton*

Please notify us of any changes or corrections in your address. We also welcome hearing from our readers and **Museum** visitors. 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.

In Memoriam President Gerald Ford (1913-2007)

“The American people have seen too much abuse of the moral imperatives of honesty and of decency upon which religion and government and civilized society must rest. To remedy these abuses, we must look not only to the government but, more importantly, to the Bible, the church, the human heart. We must look to the family for the instruction in righteousness and for the stabilizing influence so important in a complex, confusing, and ever-changing world. We must look to the faith of our fathers. The laws of God were of very special importance to our Founding Fathers and to the Nation they created.

“I believe it is no accident of history, no coincidence that this Nation, which declared its dependence on God even while declaring its independence from foreign domination, has become the most richly blessed nation in the history of mankind and the world. For it is as true today as it was in the Old Testament times that “blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.” I believe that very deeply, and so do you.

“In my own life and throughout my career in public service, I have found in the pages of the Bible a steady compass and a source of great strength and peace. As each of my predecessors in the Presidency has done, I asked for God’s guidance as I undertook the duties of this office. I have asked for that guidance many times since...

“As America enters its third century... we could ask no better inspiration than those words of a favorite passage of mine from the Book of Proverbs: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths.”

~President Ford’s Remarks to Southern Baptist Convention, 1976

Visit the Dunham Family Bible in America Museum

- Museum Hours, September-May:
 - * Tuesdays, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.
 - * Thursdays, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
 - * 2nd Saturday 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.