

Dunham Bible Museum

News



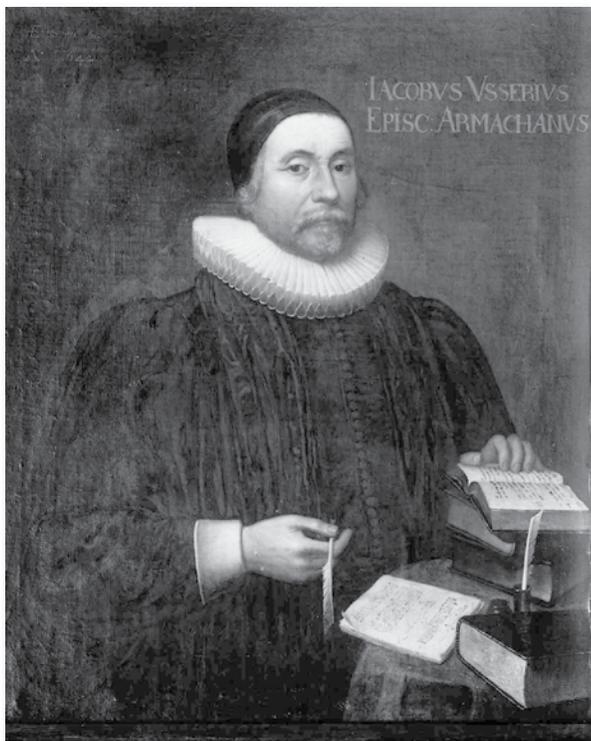
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Annals of the World comes to HBU

Recently the Dunham Bible Museum acquired the first edition of James Ussher's *Annals of the World*. First published in 1658, two years after Ussher's death, the *Annals* was truly a monumental work, reflecting a lifetime of investigation and study of the chronology of the Bible and the ancient world.



Portrait of James Ussher by William Fletcher. Ussher is shown with his Bible and books from his treasured library.

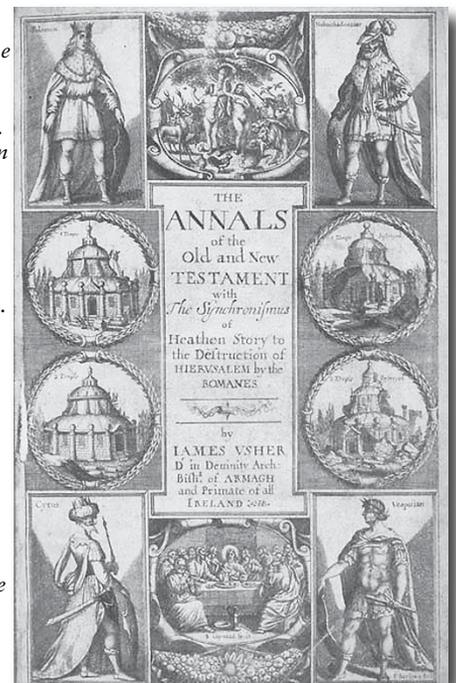
James Ussher (1581-1656) was one of the leading scholars of his day. A graduate of the newly founded Trinity College Dublin, Ussher went on to become a professor and administrator of the university. He authored 27 books, including notable histories of the early British and Irish churches. Ussher also became Archbishop of Armagh, the highest official of the Church of Ireland. Today Ussher is most remembered for his dating of Biblical and ancient events in his *Annals of the World*.

Ussher was one of many sixteenth and seventeenth century scholars who made ancient and Biblical chronology a focus of study; Sir Isaac Newton spent a great deal of time studying Biblical histories and prophecies, trying to correlate events with

known astronomical phenomena of the period. Martin Luther wrote *Reckoning the Years of the World*. Classical scholar Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) collected every chronological reference in ancient Greek and Latin works and published a chronology of the ancient world in 1583. All of these studies recognized that the Jewish people were the only ancient people who, through their Bible, had a unified history going back to the creation of the world. Centuries before, the early Christians and Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, noted the uniqueness of the Biblical narrative in their arguments for the truthfulness of the Jewish and Christian faiths. The Bible was the one book from the ancient world which provided a clear sequence of events in years. The histories of other ancient peoples, including the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, were not as complete or sequential. The Bible became the framework for understanding all other history.

Ussher began constructing his chronology by simply adding up the ages of the Biblical Patriarchs when they begot their first son. He assumed that the genealogies of Scripture were continuous and complete; later scholars recognized the

The title page of the first edition of the "Annals of the World" illustrates Ussher's method of synchronizing Biblical and secular history. The top panel depicts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden flanked by the figures of Solomon and Nebuchadnezzar (builder and destroyer of the first Jewish Temple respectively). The middle panels show the first Temple and its destruction and the second Temple and its destruction. The bottom panel shows the Last Supper, flanked by the figures of Cyrus, who decreed the building of the second Temple, and Vespasian, the Roman Emperor who destroyed the second Temple.



possibility of the incompleteness of the genealogies and gaps in the chronological records. The Babylonian captivity of Israel was the first Biblical event Ussher was able to connect with dateable events from another culture. The key dateable event for Ussher was the death of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, which could be correlated with the exile of King Joachin (II Kings 25:27). In correlating Biblical events with known secular history, Ussher became familiar with the various ancient calendar systems and used Johann Kepler's astronomical tables to help correlate events with the Julian calendar.

In 1675, a London bookseller began printing Ussher's dates for Biblical events in his Bibles. By the eighteenth century, Ussher's dates were regularly printed in Bibles. In the twentieth century, Ussher's dates were included in the popular *Scofield Reference Bible*. Because of their regular inclusion in printed Bibles, many thought Ussher's dates were part of the Scriptures themselves.

Ussher is often ridiculed today for having set the date of creation at 4004 B.C. Yet this date was consistent with other scholars of the day who studied ancient chronology and accepted a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Martin Luther set 4000 B.C. as the date of creation; Johann Kepler deduced 3992 B.C.; Joseph Scaliger calculated 3949 B.C. Their chronologies, however, never gained the fame of Ussher's chronology as set forth in his *Annals of the World*.

A Limited Time Opportunity

For a limited time, the law provides a special protection for charitable contributions from an IRA. The Pension Protection Act of 2006 allows individuals over 70 ½ years of age to make charitable gifts through their IRAs until **December 31, 2007**.

Normally, when you draw out IRA funds, tax rates as high as 35% apply. Now, a person over 70 ½ who must take mandatory withdrawals can make a significant charitable gift up to \$100,000 **without incurring tax consequences**. Until the end of the year, you can divert the money the government would have taken as taxes from your IRA to HBU's **Dunham Bible Museum**.

The **Dunham Bible Museum** also welcomes tax deductible contributions towards the completion of the new Bible Museum exhibits or the 2008 inaugural programs. Donors may send checks, made payable to the Dunham Bible Museum, to **Dunham Bible Museum – HBU**, 7502 Fondren Rd., Houston, TX 77074. Online giving is available at www.hbu.edu. For further information, contact Rick Ogden at 281-649-3355 or rogden@hbu.edu.

"The Bible is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on the children of men. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture for its matter. It is all pure, all sincere, nothing too much; nothing wanting."

— John Locke

The following poem and prayer followed the title page of most printings of the Geneva Bible after 1578. The Geneva Bible was the translation most used by the earliest English settlers in America, including the settlers at Jamestown and Plymouth.

Of the Incomparable Treasure of the Holy Scriptures, with a prayer for the true use of the same

Isa. 12:3 & 49:10	Here is the Spring where waters flow,
Rev. 21:16 & 22:17	to quench our heat of sin;
Jer. 33:15	Here is the Tree where truth doth grow,
Psa. 119:160	to lead our lives therein:
Rev. 2:7 & 22:2	Here is the Judge that stints the strife,
	when men's devices fail:
John 6:35	Here is the Bread that feeds the life,
	that death cannot assail.
Luke 2:10	The tidings of Salvation dear,
	comes to our ears from hence:
	The Fortress of our Faith is here,
Eph. 6:16	and shield of our defence.
Mal. 7:6	Then be not like the hog, that hath
	a pearl at his desire,
II Pet. 2:22	And takes more pleasure of the trough
	and wallowing in the mire.
	Read not this book, in any case,
	but with a single eye:
	Read not, but first desire God's grace,
Psa. 119:27, 73	to understand thereby.
	Pray still in faith, with this respect,
Jude 20	to fructify therein,
	That knowledge may bring this effect,
Psa. 119:11	to mortify thy sin.
	Then happy thou, in all thy life,
John 1:8	whatso to thee befalls:
Psa. 1:1,2	Yea, double happy shalt thou be,
Psa. 94:12, 13	when God by death thee calls.



O gracious God and most merciful Father, which hast vouchsafed us the rich and precious jewel of thy holy Word, assist us with thy Spirit, that it may be written in our heart to our everlasting comfort, to reform us, to renew us according to thine own image, to build us up, and edify us into the perfect building of thy Christ, sanctifying and increasing in us all heavenly virtues. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen

Between the Leaves

Between the pages of many of the Bibles in the **Dunham Bible Museum** collection are found tracts, notes, locks of hair, receipts, pressed flowers, and other items. A few of the Bibles have inscriptions or writings in them. The Robert Richardson family Bible, published in 1822 by John Holbrook in Brattleborough, Vermont is one such Bible. Extensive family records have been inscribed in the Bible, with the earliest being for Thomas Richardson, born in 1670. Within the front cover is written:

May virtue o'er your steps preside,
Religion be your constant guide
Till friendly angels guide your way
To the bright realms of endless day.

Another inscription praised the Bible:

Thou truest friend man ever knew
Thy constancy I've tried
When all was false I've found thee true
My counselor and guide.

Yet another poem inscribed in the opening of the Bible was a poem by Jane Taylor (1783-1824), daughter of Congregational minister Isaac Taylor and sister of the hymn-writer Ann Taylor. Miss Taylor's poem on the Bible was frequently reprinted in nineteenth century tracts:



THE BIBLE

This is a precious book indeed!
Happy the child that loves to read!
'Tis God's own word which he has given.
To show our souls the way to Heaven.

It bids us all from sin to fly.
Because our souls can never die;
It points where angels dwell
And warns us to escape from Hell.

But what is more than all beside
The Bible tells us Jesus died.
This is the best its chief intent,
To lead poor sinners to repent.

“The only spiritual light in the world comes through Jesus Christ and the inspired Book; redemption and forgiveness of sin alone through Christ. Without His presence and the teachings of the Bible we would be enshrouded in moral darkness and despair.

“The condition of those nations without a Christ, contrasted with those where Christ is accepted, reveals so marked a difference that no arguments are needed. It is an object-lesson so plain that it can be seen and understood by all.”

— Samuel Colgate, soap manufacturing tycoon and American Baptist

The Bible's Broad Influence on American Civilization

After visiting the young United States in the 1830s, the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, “Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country is the first thing that struck my attention; ... The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other ... In the United States the sovereign authority is religious ... There is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America, ...”

Some examples of the Bible's influence in America:

- Columbus set sail in 1492, convinced from a reading of Scriptures that the Gospel would be brought to the far reaches of the world and then Christ would return.
- Puritan colonists came to America to establish a “City on a Hill” (Matthew 5:14), an example for the world of a Christian society.
- Beginning with John Eliot, missionaries translated the Bible into many Native American languages.
- Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and many other American colleges were established to train ministers of the Gospel.
- American schoolbooks from the early *New England Primer* to Noah Webster and William McGuffey educated children in Biblical truths.
- Political speeches from William Penn to Benjamin Franklin to Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King, Jr. have been full of quotes and images from the Bible.
- Inventors such as Samuel Morse and George W. Carver studied the Bible and believed God directed them in their inventive ideas.
- The works of many American artists, authors, and song writers - including Francis S. Key, Fanny Crosby, Herman Melville, Harriet B. Stowe, and Lew Wallace - have strong Biblical themes.
- The spirituals of the African-American slaves, a genuine American contribution to the world's musical culture, have Biblical images woven throughout.
- Westward-moving American settlers regularly named their settlements after Biblical places in the USA: there are 47 variations on Bethel, 61 on Eden, and 95 on Salem.
- Entrepreneurs such as J.C. Penney and the Tappan brothers, who founded Dun & Bradstreet, looked to the Bible for their business ethics.

DUNHAM

Bible

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Visit our website at
www.hbu.edu/biblemuseum

*“The Bible is a stream, where the
elephant may swim and the lamb may wade.”
~St. Gregory the Great*

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 *Dunham Bible Museum News* by e-mail and save the University postage, send your e-mail address to dseverance@hbu.edu.



*Sketch for diorama of a medieval scribe to be seen in
the new Dunham Bible Museum*

Dates to Note during the Dunham Bible Museum's Move

- The Dunham Bible Museum will be closed the month of January 2008 while the Museum moves into its new home in the Morris Cultural Arts Center.
- The Museum will resume its normal hours in February 2008.
- Appointments for 2008 tours of the new Museum may be made now.
- Watch for special events throughout the 2008 inaugural year of the Dunham Bible Museum

For appointments or more information,
contact Dr. Diana Severance
at 281-649-3287 or dseverance@hbu.edu.