

THE
Bible
IN
America™
MUSEUM

that He provides to each of us...” One of the reasons Reagan so strongly opposed communism was because it denied its people the freedom to accept Christ and have this eternal and abundant life.

In a 1984 speech to Chinese students at Fudon University in Shanghai, Reagan explained that America’s Declaration of Independence asserted all men were created equal and were given unalienable rights by their Creator. Though America was a nation of many religions, “...most Americans derive their religious beliefs from the Bible of Moses, who delivered a people from slavery; the Bible of Jesus Christ, who told us to love thy neighbor as thyself, to do unto your neighbor as you would have him do unto you.”

Reagan believed that within the Bible “are all the answers to all the problems that face us.” To Reagan, God was the source of all wisdom and moral guidance: “When we open ourselves to Him, we gain not only moral courage but also intellectual strength.” He believed that Biblical wisdom was necessary to devise sound laws. He helswers to

Nelle Reagan’s strong Christian faith profoundly influenced Ronald as a boy and throughout his life. With her he faithfully attended the Disciples of Christ church in Dixon, Illinois, where Nelle not only taught Sunday School and headed the Missionary Society, but let the light of her Christian faith shine by visiting the prisons, helping the poor, and by her dramatic readings of Scripture. Though the family was poor and went through many difficulties, Nelle believed everything that happens does so for a reason, that God’s Providence was working out His purposes, even if they were not understood at the time. Her son shared this trust in God’s plan, purposes, and Providence throughout his life.

By the time he was fifteen, Ronald was teaching a Sunday School class of his own. Many in Dixon were convinced that the young Reagan had a call to the ministry; Nelle hoped her son would be a missionary. When Reagan spoke at his (public) high school commencement, he challenged the graduates to reflect on Jesus’ words in John 10:10, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

The rich grounding he received in the Bible continued with Reagan throughout his adult life, shaping his character, his words, and even his vision for America. When asked his favorite Scripture, he usually quoted John 3:16, elaborating, “having accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, I have God’s promise of eternal life in Heaven, as well as the abundant life here on earth

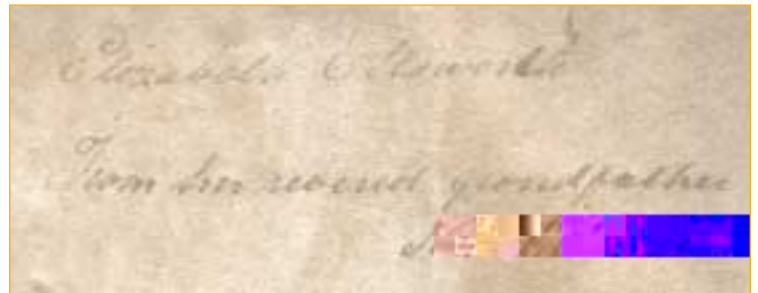
Noah Webster's Bible and Its Story



Many recognize Noah Webster as the compiler of the first American dictionary as well as the author of the blue back speller, used in American school for decades. But, few are aware that Webster also published a Bible. In his **1833 edition of the Bible**, Webster was most concerned with modernizing the King James Version, which then was over two centuries old. Many words had changed their meanings or were no longer in use, and Webster sought to provide a translation which could be understood by common readers (Read Webster's Bible preface at www.hbu.edu/bia, under "Reprints").

One of the treasures in the **Bible in America Museum** is a copy of **Noah Webster's 1833 Bible**, signed by Webster himself and given to his granddaughter Elizabeth Ellsworth. One of Noah's daughter's described the occasion of this gift as the Golden Wedding celebration in 1842 of Noah's daughter Eliza Webster Goodrich: "All the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the dear, dear old Patriarch and his wife Rebecca were invited to gather at brother Goodrich's...35 of us were there... We felt that God was with us and it was a cheerful meal...21 of us were professedly children of grace, and the others – may they too come to the cross of Christ and find in Him their everlasting portion! At five we all went to Father's and took our tea in the home of our early days. In the evening before we parted, our beloved and revered parent called our attention, and kneeling, as we all did,

fervently implored the blessing of heaven upon us, our children and our children's children to the last generation. Oh shall not that prayer be heard? Then rising, he said, it was the happiest day of his life to see us all together; so many walking in the truth and the other, children of promise...Then he presented each of us with a Bible, his last gift, with our names written by his own trembling hand; and we closed our meeting by singing "Blest be the tie that binds." Shall we ever forget it? Oh No! the youngest there received some deep impression of the blessedness of nurturing a family in the fear of God. The little Bibles are cherished gifts."



Though it has faded with age, the Bible given to Elizabeth Ellsworth can still be read as signed "From her revered grandfather, Noah Webster"

Students Study Early American Bibles

Research in the **Bible in America Museum** is part of HBU's "The Bible and Religion in America" course. In the recent quarter, students analyzed some of the earliest volumes in the collection, noting the format of the Bibles (whether printed with marginal notes, chapter or book summaries, paragraphs, etc.) and the variety of supplementary material in the Bibles. Several of the students especially liked the illustrated pull out maps in some of the Bibles, as well as the historical supplement giving additional history of the early church and the apostles. Students evaluated the supplements to determine which might

be most useful to digitize and place on the **Bible in America Museum's** website. Students also had the opportunity to study the various Bibles in the Museum's collection with study notes and commentaries. Each student chose one passage of Scripture to study in the variety of sources. Most students found **Thomas Scott's Commentary of the Bible**, first published in America in 1804, especially helpful and practical.

As they examined the old Bibles, students were intrigued by the family genealogies often written in them. Several entries were of individuals born in the 1600's. Students decided that in the future the Museum should put together an

exhibit of the "stuff" found in Bibles as well – pressed flowers and leaves, calling cards, obituaries, letters, scraps of material for bookmarks and even a cricket leg! Several poems, often devotional and sentimental, were found written in the Bibles, such as the following:

In every dark distressful hour
When sin and Satan join their power
Let this dear hope repel the dart:
That Jesus bears us on his heart.

HBU students in "Bible and Religion in America" class studying Bibles from 1700 and 1800's. Top: Chris Jones, Cathy Warden, Brian Cuthbert; Left: Derek Carter; Above: Henry Taylor and Terry Bohannon.



