

by Gabrielle Thomason, 1st place winner from HBU Academy, 2018

the enveloping nature of the history reposing there. Moving through the exhibit, the eyes alight on a cluster of books. There lies *The Children's Bible*, miniscule and nearly overlooked. It measures 2 1/4 inches by 1 7/8 inches and is 192 pages long. (Dalton 58) Withered with age and care, its yellowed pages are lined with miniscule text and powerful illustrations. Nearby a placard rests, displaying critical information concerning the tiny tome. It offers a possible solution to the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and dates the book to 1834. While much about this minute masterpiece remains a mystery, its historical background provides a clue to disentangling the enigma. This paper will endeavor to show that *The Child's Bible* is a product of two major movements in nineteenth-century America: the Second Great Awakening and the Industrial Revolution.

At the time of the publication of *The Child's Bible*, America had just emerged from the Second Great Awakening (1800s-1820s). Religious fervor was inflated, and the Age of Benevolence had begun, placing importance on the evils of slavery, the necessity of educational improvement, and the essentiality of a devout life. These ideals coursed through American society and did not escape notice. One individual who was especially intrigued with the American way of life was Alexis De Tocqueville, a young Frenchman who had been sent to

Sunday ritual of an American:

business ledgers. He opens the Holy Scriptures and discovers the sublime or touching depictions of the greatness and goodness of the

reserved for man, his duties, and his claims to everlasting life.

Thus it is that from time to time the American hides away to some degree from himself and, snatching a momentary respite from those trivial passions which agitate his life and the fleeting concerns which invade his thoughts, he suddenly bursts into the ideal world where all is
g

As De Tocqueville relates this scene, the reader senses his surprise. Earlier, De Tocqueville describes Americans as restless and unsatisfied amid prosperity, yet every Sunday the American metamorphoses, focusing on God. The Second Great Awakening imbued American culture with renewed religious enthusiasm with regard to education, piety, and abolishing slavery.

Drawing on themes of learning and holiness, it is clear how *The Child's Bible* correlates to the

influenced by the Second Great Awakening naturally desired to educate their children in Scripture, which made items such as *The Child's Bible* desirable. (English Standard Version,

Professor Russell W. Dalton. He specifically discusses *The Child's Bible* and considers the

resent day, but

The Child's Bible and other similar books

were used as an introduction to the Bible and a method for teaching Biblical principles to

children. The Awakening caused America to focus on God, bringing about the education and lifestyle reform of which *The Child's Bible* is an example.

The second significant movement that produced *The Child's Bible* was the American Industrial Revolution. Characterized by ingenious inventions and efficient, inexpensive production, the Industrial Revolution took America by storm. Although there is some debate, the Revolution is generally recognized as occurring from the 1790s to the 1830s, during which innovative souls like Whitney, Bell, Morse, and Fulton spurred the Revolution onwards.

The Industrial Revolution affected the wider distribution of readable material due to unappreciated. He introduced the mechanical transformation. In *A History of America*, Johnson relates the main thrust of necessary to bypass the craftsman with a work force of easily trained, semi-skilled men recruited craftsmanship was a luxury. Driving the price ever higher was the leakage from the skilled labor pool, since labors, with their wages, could afford ample land in as little as three years of work. streamlining the mechanics, affecting a consequential decline of prices. In fact, between the 1770s and 1820, the price of cotton yarn had decreased by 90 percent. (Johnson 308) In a like manner, the cost of producing books decreased due to advances in both printing and binding, allowing, for the first time, the middle-class to purchase books.

Along with the declining price of books, came the popularization of the thumb Bible, a miniaturized synopsis of the Bible. The first known thumb Bible, *Agnus Dei*, was available in

London in 1601; at this time, books were bound either in leather with metal clasps or in boards,