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THE BIBLE

There seems to be a lively interest in the books which came into Lincoln's hands in his early life. The editor of Lincoln Lore at certain intervals during the next few months will discuss the contents of these early publications which so vitally influenced this backwoods boy.

One would expect the Bible to be chosen as the first book which came into the life of the lad as there is evidence that his mother read the book in the home habitually. John Locke Scripps in his early biographical effort speaks of Lincoln's mother as a "ready reader." This rare pamphlet printed in 1860, for which Abraham Lincoln himself furnished much of the source material, states that "it was her (Nancy Hanks Lincoln's) custom on the Sabbath, when there was no religious worship in the neighborhood—a thing of frequent occurrence—to employ a portion of the day in reading the Scriptures aloud to her family. After Abraham and his sister had learned to read they shared by turn in the duty of Sunday reading. This practice, continued faithfully through a series of years, could not fail to produce certain effects. Among other things, its tendency was to impart an active acquaintance with Bible history and Bible teaching; and it must also have been largely instrumental in developing the religious element in the character of the younger members of the family. The facts correspond with this hypothesis. There are few men in public life so familiar with the Scriptures as Mr. Lincoln."

Through the kindness of Col. U. S. Grant, Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks for Washington, D. C., Dr. John Wesley Hill, and Lewis Gardner Reynolds, custodian of the Lincoln Museum in that city, I was given the privilege of looking over the old Lincoln Bible.

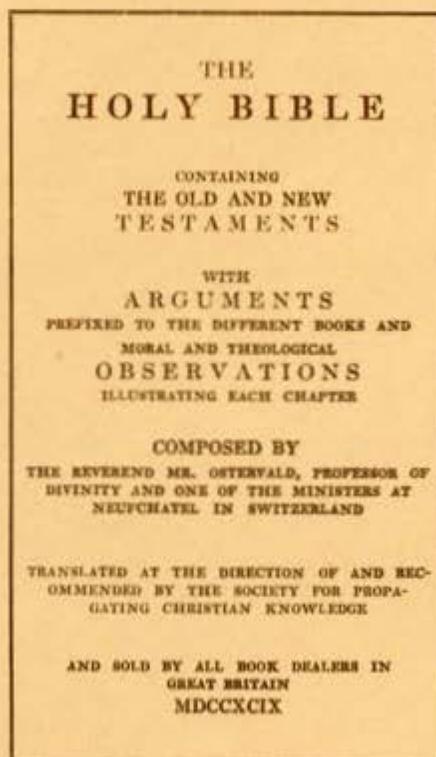
This is said to have been the original Bible owned by Abraham Lincoln's father and I discovered on the inside of the back cover the name "Thomas Lincoln" which is apparently written in his own hand.

The only other mark on the back cover is the inscription "William Miller. Price \$5.00." There were several

Miller families in the Kentucky community where the Lincolns lived and it is probable that the book was purchased at a sale.

On the back of the front cover is the name of Abraham Lincoln. The handwriting of two other persons appear on this cover, one signed "Kanhard Black his F.T." These initials may mean First Testament. In still another hand is the original price mark which appears to have been 27 shillings and later changed to 30 shillings.

The title page of this old Bible, which has been reproduced many times in various books, aroused my interest. It states that it contains "Arguments Prefixed to the Different Books and Moral and Theological Observations."



In the very copious notes introducing the different books of the Bible and also at the conclusion of each page, the composer not only interprets the Biblical language but moralizes as well. It is likely that Lincoln was greatly influenced by these interpretations as they were rather liberal for that day and time.

The most important discovery which I made in going over the old book was in the Preface under the following caption, "The Preliminary Discourse Giving Some Direction Concerning the Reading of The Holy Scripture."

"That great numbers neglect the reading of the Holy Scriptures it is evident as it is deplorable . . .

Christians there are innumerable who are almost entirely ignorant of the Bible because those that have the rule over them suffer it to be read only by particular persons, and with the greatest precaution, as if it were a dangerous thing to put the work of God indifferently into the hands of all men . . . Many, it is true, for want of learning, may not be in capacity to read the Scriptures which is a great misfortune and a shame to Christians, that the number of those who cannot read should still be so great among them . . .

"The Scriptures therefore are the most valuable blessings God ever bestowed upon us except the sending of his son into the world. They are a treasury containing everything that can make us truly rich and truly happy . . ."

After the composer has made some general statements with reference to the value of the Bible, he then goes into a lengthy and detailed discussion about the history of the Bible, touching upon the difference between the historical, doctrinal, and moral books.

His statement with regard to the New Testament as compared with the Old Testament is worthy of note. "The New Testament is that part of the Scriptures which it most concerns us to be acquainted with. If the Old Testament and the New Testament be compared together the latter is certainly the clearest and most perfect." Between the Old and New Testaments in this edition of the Bible there appeared also the Apocrypha which must have interested Lincoln greatly.

The last and possibly the most important section of the Preface has to do with the method of reading the Bible. The composer clearly marks five different steps which should be taken and discusses each step thoroughly.

Just how much this outline of study influenced Abraham Lincoln's approach to all books it is difficult to determine. The five steps are discussed under the following captions: 1. Attention and Deliberation. 2. Fervently and Diligently. 3. Judgment and Directness. 4. Submission and Obedience. 5. Piety and Devotion.

The fact that the Preface of this edition of the Bible contains eleven closely written pages, which not only gives the book a historical background and a proper division and classification of its contents, but likewise presents a very valuable method of study, would seem to have made this special edition of very great value to Abraham Lincoln.

Note: A very excellent booklet on "The Books That Lincoln Read," has recently been published by M. L. Houser of Peoria, Illinois. It lists 106 books.