

## AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

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Today our study continues as we look at our Christian Heritage. Christian education was vitally important at our beginning.

- I. Early textbooks reflected the importance of the Christian Religion.
  - A. The New England Primer was published in 1690.
    1. It became the most popular textbook for more than one hundred years.
    2. More than five million copies were sold.
    3. Lessons in the primer were saturated with Scriptures.
    4. The primer encouraged devotion to Jesus Christ.
    5. It featured pictures with some of the following captions:
      - a. In Adam's fall we sinned all.
      - b. The deluge drowned the earth around.
      - c. Elijah hid by Ravens fed.
      - d. The judgment made Felix afraid
      - e. As runs the glass our life doth pass
      - f. My Book and heart must never part.
      - g. Job feel the rod yet believes God.
      - h. Lot fled to Zoar, saw fiery shower on Sodom pour.
  - B. McGuffey's Reader eventually replaced The New England Primer.
    1. McGuffey's Reader was first published in 1836.
    2. The book was filled with religious principles.

3. The book sought religious instruction.
4. It sold more than 120 million copies.
5. It was recognized as a public school textbook in 37 states
6. McGuffey stated in the foreword: "The Christian religion is the religion of our country. From it are derived our prevalent notions of the character of God, the great moral governor of the universe. On its doctrines are found the peculiarities of our free institutions."

## II. Great leaders and their view of Christian Education

### A. Noah Webster:

1. "In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government ought to be instructed."
2. He published the first dictionary called "An American Dictionary of the English Language."
  - a. The preface stated; "No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people."
  - b. To do his dictionary justice he learned 26 languages in order to research the origins of his country's native tongue.

### B. Samuel Adams:

1. He was called the; "Father of the American Revolution."
2. He explained how America could, "Establish the permanent foundations of the freedom and happiness" when he wrote; "Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little

boys and girls, inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of the Deity.”

C. Thomas Jefferson:

1. He served as president of the Washington, D. C. school board.
2. He authored the District’s first plan for public education.
3. He included both the Bible and the Watts Hymnal as the primary books for students.

D. Benjamin Franklin:

1. Franklin once argued that schools should “afford frequent opportunities of showing the necessity of a public religion...and the excellency of the Christian religion above all others.”
2. Franklin wrote his own eulogy which stated; The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here, food for worms. Yet the work itself shall not be lost; for it will, as he believed, appear once more in a new and more beautiful edition, corrected and amended by the Author.”

III. The United States Supreme Court weighed in on Christian Education.

- A. The court in 1844 contended that educational institutions should incorporate the Bible into their curriculum.
- B. In a unanimous decision the court stated; “Why may not the Bible, and especially the New Testament, without note or comment, be read and taught as a divine revelation...its general precepts, expounded, its evidences explained, and its glorious principles of morality inculcated? Where can the purest principles of morality be learned so clearly or so perfectly as from the New Testament?”

IV. Institutions of higher learning were Bible based.

A. Harvard:

1. Was founded in 1636
2. Its rules stated; "Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of life and studies to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning."

B. The College of William & Mary;

1. Was founded in 1693
2. Its founding documents stated that it was founded so that "The Christian faith may be propagated...to the glory of God."

C. Yale University;

1. Was founded in 1701
2. Yale charged its students as follows; "Above all, have an eye to the great end of all your studies, which is to obtain the clearest conceptions of Divine things and to lead you to a saving knowledge of God in his Son Jesus Christ."

D. Princeton;

1. Was founded in 1746
2. Princeton trained more of our founders than any other institution.
3. Jonathan Dickinson its first president stated; "Cursed be all that learning that is contrary to the Cross of Christ."

E. Dartmouth College;

1. Was founded in 1769
2. Its charter stated that it was founded "For the education and instruction of youths...in reading, writing, and all parts of learning which shall appear necessary and expedient for civilizing and Christianizing the children."