

## AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

5/14/2017

Our history is one of intense Christianity. Today we continue to look at our historical beginnings.

### I. WILLIAM MCGUFFEY PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN OUR HISTORY

- A. Mr McGuffey is best know for his series of elementary school reading books known as the McGuffey Readers.
- B. Mr McGuffey was considered the "Schoolmaster of the Nation."
- C. Mr McGuffey;
  - 1. Was a professor at the University of Virginia
  - 2. Was President of Ohio University.
  - 3. Began one of our nation's first teachers associations.
- D. Mr McGuffey compiled the first four readers in the 1836-37 edition.
  - 1. They sold millions of copies
  - 2. Generations of school children read them making them some of the most influential books of all time.
  - 3. His textbooks were designed to "fit the child's education to the child's world."
  - 4. Mr McGuffey's prominent goal was to build character as well as vocabulary.
- E. In the foreword of McGuffey's reader he stated in 1836; "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 founded the peculiarities of our free institutions.”

F. The circulation of McGuffey’s Readers has been phenomenal;

1. One hundred and twenty two million copies were sold in 75 years.
2. Since 1961 they continue to sell 30,000 copies per year.

## II. MCGUFFEY MADE NO APOLOGY ABOUT SCRIPTURE IN HIS PUBLICATIONS

A. In his third reader McGuffey stated; “In making my selections, I have drawn from the purest fountains of English Literature...For the copious extracts made from the Sacred Scriptures, I make no apology.”

B. McGuffey even questioned whether he should have used more Scripture; “Indeed, upon a review of the work, I am not sure but an apology may be due for my not having still more liberally transferred to my pages the chaste simplicity, the thrilling pathos, the living descriptions, and the matchless sublimity of the sacred writings.”

C. Again McGuffey said; “The Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus are not only basic but complete.”

## III. OTHER SPIRITUAL PUBLICATIONS MOLDED THE NEW ENGLAND STATES

A. The most influential school book in the history of American education was called the “Little Bible of New England.”

1. The primer was printed in Boston in 1690
2. This 3x5 inch, 88 page devotional was the school book of America during the end of the 1600’s and early 1700’s.
3. Over three million copies were printed.
4. The alphabet was taught using Biblical verses.

B. Noah Webster's Blue Backed Speller contributed much to American education.

1. Webster stated; "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...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."
2. Webster wanted to instill in the minds of the youth; "The first rudiments of the language and some just ideas of religion, moral, and domestic economy."
3. Webster's premise is that "God's word, contained in the Bible, has furnished all necessary rules to direct our conduct."
4. His speller included a moral catechism, large portions of the Sermon on the Mount, a paraphrase of the Genesis account of creation and other statements such as; "He who came to save us, will wash us from all sin; I will be glad in his name."
5. His speller sold over 100 million copies in a century.

C. Noah Webster's dictionary was the first American dictionary.

1. It was published in 1828 and is still available today.
2. Webster worked twenty six years on his Dictionary.
  - a. During the process Webster mastered 28 languages
  - b. Webster stated; "And if the talent which God entrusted to my care, has not been put to the most profitable use in His service, I hope it has not been "kept laid up in a napkin," and that any misapplication of it may be graciously forgiven."
3. His dictionary defines words biblically and generously uses scriptural references. Notice his definition of faith;

- a. Being justified by faith. Romans v
- b. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Heb: xi
- c. For we walk by faith, not by sight. II Cor: v
- d. Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. Rom. I
- e. Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Rom. xiv
- f. Children in whom is no faith. Deut. xxxii

4. Prior to Webster's spellers, there was no objective standard in spelling.

5. 27% of the examples he provided to clarify meanings were Bible verses.

D. Webster's materials never divorced leaning from Biblical principles; "The brief exposition of the constitution of the United States will unfold to young persons the principles of republican government; and it is the sincere desire of the writer that our citizens should early understand that the genuine source of correct republican principles is the Bible, particularly the New Testament or the Christian religions."

E. Webster also said; "It is extremely important to our nation, in a political as well as religious view, that all possible authority and influence should be given to the scriptures, for these furnish the best principles of civil liberty, and the most effectual support of republican government. The principles of all genuine liberty, and of wise laws and administrations are to be drawn from the Bible and sustained by its authority. The man therefore who weakens or destroys the divine authority of that book may be accessory to all the public disorders which society is doomed to suffer."

#### IV. THEY WALKED WITH GOD WHO WENT BEFORE US!

A. "True religion affords to government its surest support." (Washington)

B. "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.  
(Washington)