

AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

2/18/2018

IN OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL CAMPAIGN, WE ARE OFFERING *NOAH WEBSTER'S 1828 DICTIONARY* TO THE PERSON WHO BRINGS THE MOST VISITORS—EIGHT OR MORE OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS. IN TODAY'S LESSON, WE WILL LEARN SOME THINGS ABOUT MR. WEBSTER.

I. NOAH WEBSTER WAS A LOT OF THINGS TO A LOT OF PEOPLE.

A. Mr. Webster published his dictionary in 1828.

1. It was called the "American Dictionary of the English Language".
2. It contained the greatest number of Biblical definitions given in any secular volume.
3. He spent over 25 years researching words and their origins.
4. His dictionary contained over 70,000 words.
5. He published a shortened version in 1806.
6. His final version was finished in 1825 and published in 1828.
7. It was immediately accepted as the greatest dictionary of the English language on both sides of the Atlantic.
8. His *American Dictionary* contained a large amount of Holy Scripture.
 - a. He used verses from both the Old and New Testaments.
 - b. His purpose of Scripture was to clarify the context in which a word was to be used.
 - c. To define the word "faith", he would include the followings sentences:
 - i. "Being justified by faith. Romans x"
 - ii. "Without faith it is impossible to please God. Heb. xi"
 - iii. "For we walk by faith not by sight. II Cor. 5"
 - iv. "With the heart man believeth to righteousness. Romans x"
 - v. "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. Romans I"
 - vi. "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Romans xiv"
 - vii. "Children in whom is no faith. Deut. Xxxii"

- d. In Webster's Dictionary, the definition of the word "Providence" is given as:

"The care and superintendence which God exercises over His creatures... . Some persons admit a general providence, but deny a particular providence, not considering that a general providence consists of particulars. A belief in divine providence is a source of great consolation to good men. By divine providence is understood God himself."

9. Webster was a genius for defining words.
10. For the first time in English-speaking history, vocabulary words had a standardized spelling.
11. In the preface of his dictionary, Webster wrote:
- a. "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."
 - b. "To that great and benevolent Being, who, during the preparation of this work, has sustained a feeble constitution amidst obstacles and toils, disappointments, infirmities and depression; who has borne me and my manuscripts in safety across the Atlantic, and given me strength and resolution to bring the work to a close, I would present the tribute of my most grateful acknowledgements."

B. Mr. Webster served as a soldier in the Revolutionary War.

C. Mr. Webster and his *American Spelling Book*:

1. It was also called the "Blueback Speller."
2. The speller became the most popular book in American Education.
3. The speller set a publishing record of one million copies per year for over 100 years.
4. His speller contained a "Moral Catechism" with rules from the Scripture on which to base moral conduct.

D. Noah Webster stated the following concerning education:

1. "Education is useless without the Bible."
2. "The Bible was America's basic text book in all fields."
3. "God's Word, contained in the Bible, has furnished all necessary rules to direct our conduct."

E. What Mr. Webster stated pertaining to the Scriptures:

"The Bible is the chief moral cause of all that is good, and the best corrector of all that is evil, in human society; the best book for regulating the temporal concerns of men, and the only book that can serve as an infallible guide to future felicity... . It is extremely important to our nation, in a political as well as a 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 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... .

"There are two powers only, sufficient to control men and secure the rights of individuals and a peaceable administration; these are the combined force of religion and law, and the force or fear of the bayonet."

II. IN 1832, WEBSTER PUBLISHED HIS *HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES*.

A. "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 of the Christian religion.

"The religion which has introduced civil liberty is the religion of Christ and His apostles, which enjoins humility, piety, and benevolence which acknowledges in every person a brother, or a sister, and a citizen with equal rights. This is genuine Christianity, and to this we owe our free constitutions of government.

"The moral principles and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws... . All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.

"When you become entitled to exercise the right of voting for public officers, let it be impressed on your mind that God commands you to choose for rulers just

men who will rule in the fear of God. The preservation of the republican government depends on the faithful discharge of this duty;

“If the citizens neglect their duty and place unprincipled men in office, the government will soon be corrupted; laws will be made not for the public good so much as for the selfish or local purposes;

“Corrupt or incompetent men will be appointed to execute the laws; the public revenues will be squandered on unworthy men; and the rights of the citizens will be violated or disregarded.

“If a republican government fails to secure public prosperity and happiness it must be because the citizens neglect the divine commands, and elect bad men to make and administer the laws.”

B. It is obvious that Webster recognized God in the prosperity of America.

III. IN 1832, WEBSTER PUBLISHED *ADVICE TO THE YOUNG*.

A. “The *Advice to the Young* will be useful in enlightening the minds of youth in religious and moral principles, and serve... to restrain some of the common vices of our country... to exterminate our popular vices is a work of far more importance to the character and happiness of our citizens than any other improvements in our system of education.”

B. Webster recognized the importance of the youth being introduced to Scriptural truths.

C. Webster stated: “Discipline our youth in early life is sound maximus of moral, political, and religious duties.”

IV. IN CLOSING:

A. Webster was elected to:

1. The Connecticut General Assembly for nine terms.
2. The Massachusetts Legislature for three terms.

B. He also served as a judge.

C. Webster died in 1843.

1. Just before his death, Webster publicly professed: “I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.”
2. It is evident that Noah Webster joined other great patriots in giving America a Christian heritage.