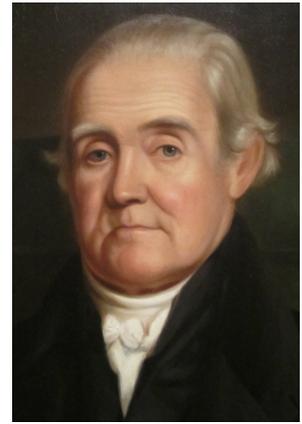


Noah Webster's First Edition of *An American Dictionary of the English Language* 1828



An Example of How Scholars of the Past Were Often Bible Believing Men

Noah Webster was born in West Hartford, CT in 1758, where his birthplace and childhood home has been restored and historic tours are given. The public library in West Hartford is called the Noah Webster Library and there is an impressive statue of him in front of the building. He was a descendant of William Bradford of the Plymouth Colony and also of John Webster, one-time governor of Connecticut. He attended Yale College and served as a volunteer in the Revolutionary War. In 1807 Webster began compiling a fully comprehensive dictionary, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. To evaluate the etymology of words, Webster learned twenty-six languages, including Old English (Anglo-Saxon), Greek, Hebrew and Latin. He is often called the “Father of American Scholarship and Education.” He produced his own modern English translation of the Bible in 1833.

Quotes by Noah Webster:

The Bible must be considered as the great source of all the truth by which men are to be guided in government as well as in all social transactions.

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 religion.

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.

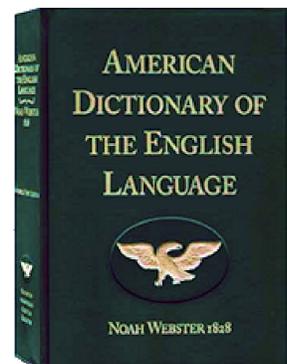
All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.

[*A prophetic statement*] 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 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 citizen will be violated or disregarded.

Definitions by Noah Webster (1828):

[**Note:** Any Scripture references listed below were included by Noah Webster as part of his definition. However, he would often just give the chapter and assume that the reader knew the Bible well enough to find the verse. I have included the verse. ~GWZ]

Marriage: The act of uniting a man and woman for life; wedlock; the legal



union of a man and woman for life ... Marriage was instituted by God Himself for the purpose of preventing the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, for promoting domestic felicity, and for securing the maintenance and education of children.

Gender: A sex, male or female.

Sodomite: 1. An inhabitant of Sodom. 2. One guilty of sodomy.

Sodomy: A crime against nature.

Note: *The words "homosexual" and "lesbian" and "transgender" are not found in Webster's 1828 dictionary.*

Republic: A state in which the exercise of the sovereign power is lodged in representatives elected by the people. In modern usage, it differs from a democracy or democratic state, in which the people exercise the powers of sovereignty in person.

Salvation: The redemption of man from the bondage of sin and liability to eternal death, and the conferring on him everlasting happiness.

Grace: The free unmerited love and favor of God, the spring and source of all the benefits men receive from Him (Rom. 11:6).

Faith: Saving faith is the assent of the mind to the truth of divine revelation, on the authority of God's testimony, accompanied with a cordial assent of the will or approbation of the heart; an entire confidence or trust in God's character and declarations, and in the character and doctrines of Christ, with an unreserved surrender of the will to His guidance, and depend on His merits for salvation. In other words, that firm belief of God's testimony, and of the truth of the gospel, which influences the will, and leads to an entire reliance on Christ for salvation. Bible: The sacred volume in which are contained the revelations of God, the principles of Christian faith, and the rules of practice.

Scripture: The word is used either in the singular or plural number, to denote the sacred writings or divine oracles, called *sacred* or *holy*, as proceeding from God, and containing sacred doctrines and precepts.

Millennium: The thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 during which period Satan shall be bound and restrained from seducing men to sin, and Christ will reign on earth with His saints.

Satan: The grand adversary of man; the devil or prince of darkness; the chief of the fallen angels.

Dispensation: That which is dispensed or bestowed; a system of principles and rites enjoined; as the Mosaic dispensation; the gospel dispensation.

Justification: An act of free grace by which God pardons the sinner and accepts him as righteous on account of the atonement of Christ.

Sin: The voluntary departure of a moral agent from a known rule of rectitude or duty, prescribed by God; any voluntary transgression of the divine law, or violation of a divine command. Sin is either a positive act in which a known divine law is violated, or it is the voluntary neglect to obey a positive divine command, or a rule of duty clearly implied in such command. Sin comprehends no actions only, but neglect of known duty, all evil thoughts, purposes, works and desires, whatever is contrary to God's commands or law (1 John 3:4).

Redemption: The purchase of God's favor by the death and sufferings of Christ; the ransom or deliverance of sinners from the bondage of sin and the penalties of God's violated law by the atonement of Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

Hell: The place or state of punishment for the wicked after death (Matt. 10:28).

Spiritual Journey of Noah Webster:

Early in his life Noah Webster had a faulty understanding of salvation, as so many do today. He thought that salvation could be attained by faithfully fulfilling the duties of life and the requirements of the Bible. The following fascinating account shows how Noah Webster eventually learned that salvation must be wholly of grace and based solely upon the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The following account on *The Life and Testimony of Noah Webster* was written by Chauncey A. Goodrich, Professor in Yale College, 1847 and is found in the following volume, *Teaching and Learning America's Christian History*, developed by Rosalie J. Slater (1965, published by Foundation for American Christian Education), pages 295-297.

In respect to religion, Dr. Webster was a firm believer, during a large part of his life, in the great distinctive doctrines of our Puritan ancestors, whose character he always regarded with the highest veneration. There was a period, however, from the time of his leaving college to the age of forty, when he had doubts as to some of those doctrines, and rested in a different system. Soon after he graduated, being uncertain what business to attempt or by what means he could obtain subsistence, he felt his mind greatly perplexed, and almost overwhelmed with gloomy apprehensions. In this state, as he afterward informed a friend, he read Johnson's Rambler with unusual interest; and, in closing the last volume, he made a firm resolution to pursue a course of virtue through life; and to perform every moral and social duty with scrupulous exactness. To this he added a settled belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures and the governing providence of God, connected with highly reverential views of the divine character and perfections. Here he rested, placing his chief reliance for salvation on a faithful discharge of all the relative duties of life, though not to the entire exclusion of dependence on the merits of the Redeemer. In this state of mind he remained, though with some misgiving and frequent fluctuations of feeling, to the winter of 1807-8. At that time, there was a season of general religious interest at New Haven, under the ministry of the Rev. Moses Stuart, now a professor in the Andover Theological Seminary. To this Dr. Webster's attention was first directed, by observing an unusual degree of tenderness and solemnity of feeling in all the adult members of his family. He was thus led to reconsider his former views, and inquire, with an earnestness which he had never felt before, into the nature of personal religion, and the true ground of man's acceptance with God. He had now to decide not for himself only, but, to a certain extent, for others, whose spiritual interests were committed to his charge. Under a sense of this responsibility, he took up the study of the Bible with painful solicitude.

As he advanced, the objections which he had formerly entertained against the humbling doctrines of the gospel, were wholly removed. He felt their truth in his own experience. He felt that salvation **must** be wholly of grace. He felt constrained, as he afterward told a friend, to cast himself down before God, confess his sins, implore pardon through the merits of the Redeemer, and there to make his vows of entire obedience to the commands and devotion to the service of his Maker. With his characteristic promptitude, he instantly made known to his family the feelings which he entertained. He called them together the next morning, and told them, with deep emotion, that, while he had aimed at the faithful discharge of all his duties as their parent and head, he had neglected one of the most important, that of family prayer. After reading the Scriptures, he led them, with deep solemnity, to the throne of grace, and from that time continued the practice, with the liveliest interest, to the period of his death. He made a public profession of religion in April, 1808. His two oldest daughters united with him in the act, and another, only twelve years of age, was soon added to the number.

In his religious feelings, Dr. Webster was remarkably equable and cheerful. He had a very strong sense of the providence of God, as extending to the minutest concerns of life. In this he found a source of continual support and consolation, under the severe labors and numerous trials which he had to endure. To the same divine hand he habitually referred all his enjoyments; and it was known to his family, that he rarely, if ever, took the slightest refreshment, of any kind, even between meals, without a momentary pause, and a silent tribute of thanks to God as the giver. He made the Scriptures his daily

study. After the completion of his Dictionary, especially, they were always lying on his table, and he probably read them more than all other books. He felt, from that time, that the labors of his life were ended, and that little else remained but to prepare for death. With a grateful sense of past mercies, a cheering consciousness of present support, and an animating hope of future blessedness, he waited with patience until his appointed change should come.

During the spring of 1843, Dr. Webster revised the Appendix of his Dictionary, and added some hundreds of words. He completed the printing of it about the middle of May. It was the closing act of his life. His hand rested, in its last labors, on the volume which he had commenced thirty-six years before. Within a few days, in calling on a number of friends in different parts of the town, he walked, during one afternoon, between two and three miles. The day was chilly, and immediately after his return, he was seized with faintness and a severe oppression on his lungs. An attack of peripneumony followed, which, though not alarming at first, took a sudden turn after four or five days, with fearful indications of a fatal result. It soon became necessary to inform him that he was in imminent danger. He received the communication with surprise, but with entire composure. His health had been so good, and every bodily function so perfect in its exercise, that he undoubtedly expected to live some years longer. But though suddenly called, he was completely ready. He gave some characteristic directions as to the disposal of his body after death. He spoke of his long life as one of uniform enjoyment, because filled up at every stage with active labors for some valuable end. He expressed his entire resignation to the will of God, and his unshaken trust in the atoning blood of the Redeemer. It was an interesting coincidence, that his former pastor, the Rev. Mr. Stuart, who received him to the church thirty-five years before, had just arrived at New Haven on a visit to his friends. He called immediately; and the interview brought into affecting comparison the beginning and the end of that long period of consecration to the service of Christ. The same hopes which had cheered the vigor of manhood, were now shedding a softened light over the decay and sufferings of age. "I know in whom I have believed,"—such was the solemn and affecting testimony which he gave to his friend, while the hand of death was upon him,—"I know in whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Thus, without one doubt, one fear, he resigned his soul into the hands of his Maker, and died on the 28th day of May, 1843, in the eighty-fifth year of his age.

In his person, Dr. Webster was tall, and somewhat slender, remarkably erect throughout life, and moving, even in his advanced years, with a light and elastic step.

Dr. Webster's widow survived him more than four years, and died on the 25th day of June, 1847, in the eighty-second year of her age. He had seven children who arrived at maturity,—one son, William G. Webster, Esq., who resides at New Haven, and six daughters. Of these, the oldest is married to the Hon. William W. Ellsworth, of Hartford, late governor, and now judge of the Supreme Court of Connecticut; the second to the author of this sketch; the third, now deceased, was first married to Edward Cobb, Esq., of Portland, Maine, and afterward to the Rev. Professor Fowler, of Amherst, Mass.; the fourth, also deceased, was married to Horatio Southgate, Esq., of Portland, Maine, and left at her death a daughter, who was adopted by Dr. Webster, and is now married to Henry Trowbridge, Jun., Esq., of New Haven; the fifth is married to the Rev. Henry Jones, of Bridgeport, Conn.; and the sixth remains unmarried, in the family of her brother.

In conclusion, it may be said that the name of *Noah Webster*, from the wide circulation of some of his works, is known familiarly to a greater number of the inhabitants of the United States, than the name, probably, of any other individual except the *Father of his Country*. Whatever influence he thus acquired was used at all times to promote the best interests of his fellow-men. His books, though read by millions, have made no man worse. To multitudes they have been of lasting benefit, not only by the course of early training they have furnished, but by those precepts of wisdom and virtue with which almost every page is stored.

August, 1847.