

Noah Webster's Notable Quotations:

"Father of American Scholarship and Education"

"Every civil government is based upon some religion or philosophy of life. Education in a nation will propagate the religion of that nation. In America, the foundational religion was Christianity. And it was sown in the hearts of Americans through the home and private and public schools for centuries. Our liberty, growth, and prosperity was the result of a Biblical philosophy of life. Our continued freedom and success is dependent on our educating the youth of America in the principles of Christianity."

- Noah Webster

"The heart should be cultivated with more assiduity than the head."

- Noah Webster

"Before a standing army can rule, the people must be disarmed; as they are in almost every kingdom of Europe. The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword; because the whole body of the people are armed, and constitute a force superior to any band of regular troops that can be, on any pretence, raised in the United States."

- Noah Webster

"The moral principles and precepts contained in the Scripture ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws."

- Noah Webster

"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. "

- Noah Webster

"Unaffected modesty is the sweetest charm of female excellence, the richest gem in the diadem of her honor."

- Noah Webster

"The reasonableness of the command to obey parents is clear to children, even when quite young. "

- Noah Webster

"A pure democracy is generally a very bad government, It is often the most tyrannical government on earth; for a multitude is often rash, and will not hear reason. "

- Noah Webster

"Every child in America should be acquainted with his own country. He should read books that furnish him with ideas that will be useful to him in life and practice. As soon as he opens his lips, he should rehearse the history of his own country."

- Noah Webster

"The education of youth should be watched with the most scrupulous attention. [I]t is much easier to introduce and establish an effectual system ... than to correct by penal statutes the ill effects of a bad system. ... The education of youth ... lays the foundations on which both law and gospel rest for success."

- Noah Webster

"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 [secular] concerns of men."

- Noah Webster

"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... When I speak of the Christian religion as the basis of government... I mean the primitive Christianity in its simplicity as taught by Christ and His apostles, consisting of a belief in the being, perfections, and government of God; in the revelation of His will to men, as their supreme rule of action; in man's... accountability to God for his conduct in this life; and in the indispensable obligation of all men to yield entire obedience to God's commands in the moral law and the Gospel."

- Noah Webster

"The foundation of all free government and all social order must be laid in families and in the discipline of youth. Young people must not only be furnished with knowledge, but they must be accustomed to subordination and subjected to the authority and influence of good principles. It will avail little that youths are made to understand truth and correct principles, unless they are accustomed to submit to be governed by them... And any system of education... which limits instruction to the arts and sciences, and rejects the aids of religion in forming the character of citizens, is essentially defective."

- Noah Webster

"He only can be esteemed really and permanently happy, who enjoys peace of mind in the favor of God."

- Noah Webster

"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."

- Noah Webster

"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. They teach the true principles of that equality of rights which belongs to every one of the human family, but only in consistency with a strict subordination to the magistrate and the law."

- Noah Webster

"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 [our] 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 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. If [our] 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." -History of United States by Noah Webster.

- Noah Webster

Noah Webster

Noah Webster (1758 – 1843), was a lexicographer and a language reformer. He is often called the "Father of American Scholarship and Education". In his lifetime he was also a lawyer, schoolmaster, author, newspaper editor and an outspoken politician.

Noah Webster was a very learned and devout man, and his ideas about language in his long introduction to his dictionary make for interesting reading. The frontispiece gives us a wonderful portrait of Webster. He presents as a man of strong will and determination, qualities he would have needed to push his great project to a conclusion.

In 1807 Webster began compiling a fully comprehensive dictionary, An American Dictionary of the English Language; it took twenty-eight years to complete. To evaluate the etymology of words, Webster learned twenty-six languages, including Old English (Anglo-Saxon), Greek, Hebrew and Latin.

Webster completed his dictionary during his year abroad in 1825 in Paris, France, and at the University of Cambridge. His book contained seventy thousand words, of which twelve thousand had never appeared in a published dictionary before. As a spelling reformer, Webster believed that English spelling rules were unnecessarily complex, so his dictionary introduced American English spellings, replacing colour with color, substituting wagon for waggon, and printing center instead of centre. He also added American words, like skunk and squash, that did not appear in British dictionaries. At the age of seventy, Webster published his dictionary in 1828, registering the copyright on April 14. Webster did all this in an effort to standardize the American language.

Noah Webster's House Webster's New Haven home, where he wrote An American Dictionary of the English Language. Now relocated to Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan.



Though it now has an honored place in the history of American English, Webster's first dictionary only sold two and a half thousand copies. He was forced to mortgage his home to develop a second edition, and his life from then on was plagued with debt.

In 1840, the second edition was published in two volumes. On May 28, 1843, a few days after he had completed revising an appendix to the second edition, Noah Webster died.

Noah Webster was a Christian and famously said "Education is useless without the Bible." His dictionary contains seventy thousand words and over six thousand Bible references and remains one of the only mainstream dictionaries to use Bible references to demonstrate the meaning of words. His dictionary is an essential tool for anyone studying the Bible.

Christian readers will find it rewarding to compare his definitions of such words as "marriage", "education", "sin", "law", "faith", "prayer", etc., with those given in any modern dictionary. They will no doubt be surprised at the great differences, and may come away with a renewed respect for American.

Noah Webster also used quotes from many authors of classical literature in his dictionary. His work went on to inspire many other authors in their use of the language. As with Emily Dickinson, we know that she made frequent and extensive use of Noah Webster's 'Dictionary of the English Language' in writing her poems, paying attention not only to definitions but also to Webster's etymologies and his illustrative quotations.

The scholarly consensus is that she probably made use of an 1844 reprint of the 1841 edition, but since this is now rare, and since the 1828 edition was also in the Dickinson library, the present facsimile of the 1828 edition becomes an important resource for helping us to recover at least some of the senses in which she understood certain words.

This is a book that should be in everyone's library, as providing a fund of wisdom, knowledge, and information that few modern books can even begin to approach.