

The Influence of the Bible on America

Too little time is spent reading and studying the Bible

Pilgrims - seeking religious liberties - Geneva Bibles - particular favorite for those who had been persecuted - persecution started when the question the practices of the Catholic churches.

Issues raised by the dissenters

- 1) wanted people to have access to God's Word
- 2) Wanted to influence the culture - exposed cultural activities that were against the scriptures.

Study of Scripture showed that monarchy was not God's will - republic - Exodus 18 - chooses leaders

Exodus 18:21 - But select capable men from all the people - men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain -- and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

Geneva Bible had notes from great reformers

Pilgrims spent several hours a day in the Bible

Private Property - two commandments

You shall not steal
You shall not covet

Times of the Puritans - King owned all.

Pilgrims purchased land from the Indians

Men would be in the kingdom from every nation - shaped their view of man and race relations.

Puritans left socialism

- 1 Timothy 5:8
- 2 Thess 3:10

Able bodied the community would not provide for you - they would help those who could not work.

Kings did not like the Geneva Bible - divine right of kings was not in scripture; King was the mouthpiece of God

Benjamin Franklin - There is scarce a king in a hundred who would not, if he

could, follow the example of Pharaoh: get first all the people's money, then all their lands, and then make them and their children servants forever.

King James Bible - was the Bible put out of the King James Bible - it removed all the marginal commentaries.

1647 - Education became a real need in America

Early law in 1647 - they wanted to prevent persecutions that took place in Europe - they felt education was needed to keep people from persecution.

Common people could read and study the Bible - they would be good citizens

Code of 1650 - If being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these latter times by persuading from the use of tongues, that so that at least the true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded and corrupted with false glosses of saint-seeming deceivers; and to the end that learning may not be buried in the grave of our forefathers, in church and commonwealth the Lord assisting our endeavors.

It is therefore ordered that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to fifty households shall forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read, and whose wages shall be paid either by the parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general, by way of supply, as the major part of those that order the prudentials of the town shall appoint; provided those that send their children be not oppressed by paying much more than they can have them taught for in other towns.

And it is further ordered, that when any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families or householders, they shall set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct so far as they may be fitted for the university.

Thomas Jefferson - used separation of church and state to keep government from stopping religious education.

1690 - Illiteracy law

Connecticut Illiteracy Law 1690 - This (legislature) observing that notwithstanding our former orders made for the education of children . . . there are many persons unable to read the English tongue, and thereby incapable of reading the Holy Word of God or the good laws of this state.

First American printed education book - New England Primer - key text from

which American's learned to read - started with phonics, how to join words together

1776 - Independence

John Quincy Adams - The Declaration of Independence (was) . . . founded upon one and the same theory of government . . . expounded in the writings of Locke.

John Locke - Two Treatise of Government

Richard Henry Lee - Declaration of Independence was copied from Locke's "Treatise on Government"

Locke refers to the Bible over 1500 times in less than four hundred pages.

1781-1783

1781 - Battle of Yorktown - we won our independence - completely free from England

First English language Bible - 20,000 copies (26 remains) - rarest book - Bible of the Revolution - a neat edition of the Holy Scriptures for the use of schools.

September 12, 1782 - approved by Congress - congressional endorsement in front of Bible

Resolved, that the United States in Congress assembled . . . recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States.

Who will call in question the assertion that (America) is a Bible nation? Who will charge the government with indifference to religion when the first Congress of the States assumed all the rights and performed all the duties of a Bible Society long before such an institution had an existence in the world.

June 8, 1783 - George Washington resignation letter - Issued a circular letter to all the governors of the States.

I now make it my earnest prayer that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in His holy protection . . . that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, without an humble imitation of Whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation.

1787 - Constitutional Convention

June 28, 1787 - Benjamin Franklin to George Washington and the rest of the convention

Mr. President: In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguished it when presented to us, how has it happened, sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understanding? In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor . . . and have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth - that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the Sacred Writings, that "except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain who build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. . . . I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business.

Specific political sources for our government (15,000 writings - 3,154 direct quotations)

Bible - 34% of all direct quotations came from the Bible.

Separation of powers - Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond a cure. Who can understand it?

Uniform Immigration Law - Leviticus 19:34 - The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God

President - natural born citizen - Deuteronomy 17:15 - Be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you.

Witnesses and Capital Punishment - Deuteronomy 17:6 - On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

Protection of family - Ezekiel 18:20 - The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son.

Three branches of Government - Isaiah 33:22 - For the Lord is our Judge (Judicial branch), the Lord is our Lawgiver (Legislative branch), the Lord is our King (Executive Branch)

Tax Exemption for Churches - Ezra 7:24 - You are also to know that you have

no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God.
Republicanism - Exodus 18:21 - But select capable men from all the people - men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain - and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

John Adams - The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were . . . the general principles of Christianity. Now I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God.

1791

Benjamin Rush - In contemplating the political institutions of this United States, I lament that (if we remove the Bible from schools) we waste so much time and money in punishing crimes and take so little pains to prevent them . . . For this Divine Book, above all others, favors that equality among mankind, that respect for just laws, and those sober and frugal virtues which constitute the soul of (our government).

James Wilson - Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is divine . . . far from being rivals or enemies, religion and law are twin sisters, friends and mutual assistants. Indeed, these two sciences run into each other . . . our all-gracious Creator, Preserver, and Ruler has been pleased to discover and enforce His laws by a revelation given to us immediately and directly from Himself. This revelation is contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Fisher Ames - It has been the custom of late years to put a number of little books into the hands of children, containing fables and moral lessons. This is very well because it is right first to raise curiosity and then to guide.

Why then, if these books for children must be retained, as they will be, (why) should not the Bible regain the place it once held as a school book? Its morals are pure, its examples, captivating and noble. The reverence for the Sacred Book that is thus early impressed lasts long, and probably, if not impressed in infancy, never takes firm hold of the mind.

1809

Bible Society of Philadelphia - First mass produce Bible - started by founders

Baltimore Bible Society - James McHenry - Fort McHenry - national anthem

James McHenry - The Holy Scriptures can alone secure to society, order and peace, and to our courts of justice and constitutions of government, purity, stability, and usefulness. In vain, without the Bible, we increase penal laws and

draw (protections) around our institutions.

American Bible Society - still exists today - Elias Boudinot - first President of ABS

Elias Boudinot - For nearly half a century, I have anxiously and critically studied the Bible and I still scarcely ever take it up that I do not find something new.

Were you to ask me to recommend the most valuable book in the world, I should fix on the Bible as the most instructive - both to the wise and the ignorant.

Were you to ask me for one book affording the most rational and pleasing entertainment to the enquiring mind, I would still say the Bible. And should you ask again about the best philosophy, or the most interesting history, I would still urge you to look into your Bible. I would make it, in short, the alpha and omega of knowledge.

1828 & 1833

Noah Webster - Webster Dictionary - Founder of America

Webster has left us a standard of the English language which will guide all successive ages . . . (Noah Webster) grew up with his country and he molded the intellectual character of her people. Not a man has sprung from her soil on whom he has not laid his hand. His principles of language have tinged every sentence that is now, or will ever be uttered by an American tongue.

Webster Modern Dictionary - removed scriptures

Daniel Webster - When little children were brought into the presence of the Son of God, His disciples proposed to send them away, but (Jesus) said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me (Matthew 19;14). Unto me! And that injunction is of perpetual obligation; it addresses itself today with the same earnestness and the same authority which attended its first utterance to the Christian world. It is force everywhere and at all times, it extends to the ends of the earth, it will reach to the end of time always and everywhere sounding in the ears of men with an . . . authority which nothing can supersede. "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

Joseph Story - Why may not the Bible, and especially the New Testament, without note or comment, be read and taught as a Divine revelation in the (school) - its general precepts expounded . . . 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? Where are benevolence, the love of the truth, sobriety, and industry, so powerfully and irresistibly inculcated as in the Sacred Volume? (1844)

1848

John Quincy Adams - writing to his son (10 years old) - The first and almost the only book deserving of universal attention is the Bible. I have myself for many years made it a practice to read the Bible once every year. I have always endeavored to read it with the same spirit and with the same temper of mind which I now recommend to you: that is, with the intention and desire that it may contribute to my advance in wisdom and virtue.

It is no slight testimonial to the verity and worth of Christianity that in all ages since its promulgation, the great mass of those who have risen to eminence by their profound wisdom, integrity, and philanthropy, have recognized and revered in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Living God.”

1892

Kanas Teachers Association - If the study of the Bible is to be excluded from all State schools - if the inculcation of the principles of Christianity is to have no place in the daily program - if the worship of God is to form no part of the general exercises of these public elementary schools - then the good of the State would be better served by restoring all schools to church control.

Final Three Quotes

John Jay - The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the Word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts.

John Adams - Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited . . . what a utopia - what a paradise would this region be.

Noah Webster - The brief exposition of the Constitution of the United States will unfold to young persons the principles of republican government; and our citizens should early understand that the genuine source of correct republican principles is the Bible.

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

Conclusion:

Psalms 11:3 - When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Preserve our foundations

- 1) Our own lives - study the word of God - change by the bottom up
- 2) Top down - elected officials - **Exodus 18:21** - But select capable men from all the people - men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain.

Proverbs 14:34 - Righteousness exalts a nation.