



Principle Approach® Education

GRANDPARENTING WITH NOAH WEBSTER: *BIBLICAL TEACHER OF A SELF-GOVERNING CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLIC*

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BLESSING THE GENERATIONS

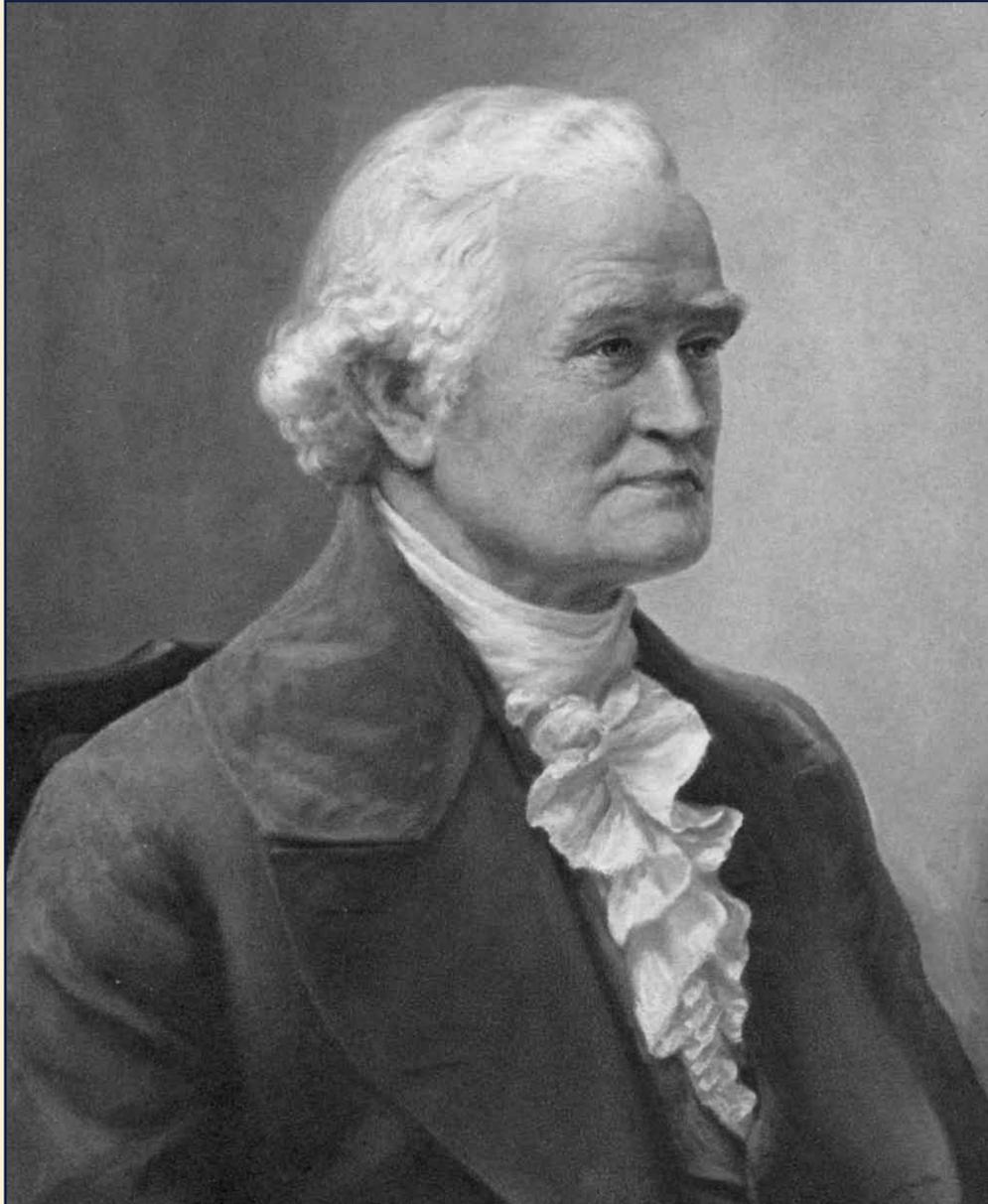
In America, we have the freedom to teach and the obligation to learn. So grandparents, having first served their time as parents, now can prepare themselves to do the crowning of their mission with their blessed grandchildren.

Noah Webster, Founding Father of American Scholarship and Education, made a number of comments on the effort children should make to master principles and leading ideas. Of course, this also implies that both parents and grandparents must do the same. In this age, we are blessed to still have some parents and grandparents who already know what they should teach. For we are inundated by flood tides of secularism. As the Bible warns us, “Be not deceived. God is not mocked!” (Galatians 6:7)

Unlike the father of John Muir in Scotland, who punished his son often, we must not approach learning with beatings. (Yes, but the great heart of John Muir refused to take in the vehemence and the physical force.) Like Jesus, the challenge is one of love and help. When our great American bird, the bald eagle, wishes her children to leave the nest to fly, she uses a subtle technique; suddenly the young birds find the sides of the nest have become sharp and pointed. They jump up on the sides, look over the edge, and soon find themselves tempted to soar. But, as the Bible reports, “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings. (Deuteronomy 32:11)

Unlike other birds whose young jump from great heights, the baby eagles are borne on the wings of the adult birds. Moses’ song indicates that God chose Israel as his people. He sought His people in a “desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him [them] about, he instructed him [them], he kept him [them] as the apple of his eye.” (Deuteronomy 32:10)

So when the time to fly on their own is come, God is ready to be a safeguard to the young eagles. The lesson is for our use, too.



NOAH WEBSTER
1758-1843



NOAH WEBSTER'S INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN EDUCATION

Grandparenting blesses the next generation with all that has been verified and believed to be important for our family and our nation. We are so grateful that a new biography has appeared entitled, *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* by Harlow Giles Unger (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998). In the book, Mr. Unger clearly identifies Noah Webster as a founding father whom American history forgot.

Fortunately, as a descendant of the Founders of Hartford, Connecticut, I had already discovered the critical importance of a number of areas of American education that Noah Webster believed to be essential to maintaining and sustaining our Christian constitutional republic. Unfortunately, when after the American Revolution public education began to receive governmental support, Horace Mann proclaimed that the Bible must be dropped from the curriculum. The reason was Horace Mann's "condition . . . that Christianity be neutralized for the larger goal of building, not Christian character and conscience, but humanitarians with benevolent inclinations toward mankind."¹

In the article "The American Christian School" in *Teaching and Learning America's Christian History*, we added this point,

. . . And for those individuals who wished the schools to teach patriotism which indicated how great was the "faith of our fathers," there was substituted a bland form of non-controversial democracy and "citizenship in the state." Thus the public school was able to accomplish that which the hired European mercenaries of England never could—namely, to separate our patriotism from our Christian conviction . . .²

In 1967, the Foundation did its first reprinting of Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1828 facsimile edition. We added my biography of Noah Webster, entitled, "Noah Webster: the Founding Father of American Scholarship and Education." Unlike many Americans, Noah Webster recognized that we needed to proclaim our distinct individuality—even from our mother country. And God blessed this vision, for through Noah Webster, the nation was unified, first in language, and second, through an education which emphasized a distinctive American and constitutional approach to government. Noah Webster taught that republican government grew out of Scriptural principles. Webster sought to build an education system embodying a love of virtue, patriotism, and religion.

When we refer to Noah Webster as the "Founding Father of American Scholarship and Education," we are referring to the most important aspect of the American Revolution. In the world of the eighteenth century, it was remarkable—we would say Providential—that the thirteen colonies won their independence from the greatest military nation of the day, namely, Great Britain. But more remarkable was that the new nation, which came into being with such a heritage from Great Britain, should turn out to be so individual and so distinct.

American independence and American individuality came about as planned by God, because America represented Christianity's westward course through the centuries and across the continents of history, unfolding the Biblical principles of "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."



Verna Hall, as a researcher and compiler, discovered a remarkable scholar, Arnold Guyot of Switzerland, who came to Princeton University and explained the role of geography in the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Asia was defined by Guyot as “the Continent of Origins,” where both creation and Christ first appeared. Europe was identified as the “Continent of Development” where the Apostle Paul carried the Gospel and began the Christian church. But Guyot indicated that, while many in Europe benefited by the degree to which Christianity had blessed Europe, not all individuals had access to its blessings. Geographically, the territory of the northern United States was open to all—it had no barriers and was appropriate to become the most complete expression of the Christian civilization.

As this Providential fact became an historical reality, it required a Biblical constitutional form of government and an education that would ensure that each generation would lay foundations which should not fail.

One might dispute the ideal that the early colonists to America came here primarily for government. Yet as one examines the record, it is obvious that “consent of the governed” was the keynote for every settlement. The Declaration of Independence records for eternity the Biblical principle that “all men are created equal” and are entitled to “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” To ensure the “consent of the governed,” parents and pastors took on the responsibility of educating their little ones in all that would ensure the perpetuation of the Republic.

The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association wrote us and reported the following:

A recently released survey shows that nearly 60% of high school seniors lack even a basic knowledge of U.S. History . . . Also, I can tell you from personal experience that some students right here in Virginia do not even know that Mount Vernon was George Washington’s home.

Mrs. Robert E. Lee, IV, went on to report that, at a forum held by the National Council of Social Studies, one panelist argued:

We need to de-exceptionalize the United States. We’re just another country and another group of people.

Every spring, StoneBridge School in Chesapeake, Virginia sends its seniors abroad to preach how “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” can be achieved in each nation as long as each nation accepts the first statement of our Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Our pastor, Reverend Nate Atwood of the Kempsville Presbyterian Church of Virginia Beach, Virginia, preached a Fourth of July sermon entitled, “We Hold These Truths . . .” He began with the statement that America is losing its history—because we are not remembering it or teaching it.



For the 200th anniversary of American Independence, Verna Hall included in her volume *The Christian History of the American Revolution* a wonderful election sermon by Reverend S. W. Foljambe “The Hand of God in American History,” which began with these critical words:

The more thoroughly a nation deals with its history, the more decidedly will it recognize and own an overruling Providence therein, and the more religious a nation will it become; while the more superficially it deals with its history, seeing only secondary causes and human agencies, the more irreligious will it be. If the history of any nation is the development of the latent possibilities existent in its special nature, it is also the record of a Divine Providence furnishing place and scope for that development, creating its opportunities, and guiding its progress. History is not a string of striking episodes, with no other connection but that of time. It is rather the working out of a mighty system, by means of regularly defined principles as old as creation, and as the infallible as divine wisdom. With this truth in view, we approach our chosen theme,—THE HAND OF GOD IN AMERICAN HISTORY. ³

The hand of God produced American Liberty with Law. If we drop the source of our Liberty—namely God—then our Liberty will also disappear.

WHAT MADE AMERICA “AMERICAN?”

A Knowledge of Our Providential History

Noah Webster knew that after the American Revolution, numbers of foreigners poured into our country. Webster felt it was a “matter of infinite consequence” to inform them of “the distinction between a Democracy and a Republic.” The genius of a representative republic and its contrast with a democracy is that the “powers of the people are not in their hands” but in their representatives. This is the key phrase from our Declaration of Independence which insures the “unalienable” rights of the individual is that they must establish a government that requires “the consent of the governed;” consent comes through elected representatives.

How important it is today that these distinctions be known both by us and by our succeeding generations!

This is why Noah Webster became the first to produce textbooks that embodied the elements of Providential Biblical principles of government. And in his grammars, and especially spelling books, Webster emphasized the character of a republic. Webster wanted all—foreigners and Americans—to know the distinction between a “government of laws” and “arbitrary government.”

Why did his little “blue-backed speller” become the most used American text over the first one hundred years of our Republic? It not only taught the principles of America in words, but it gave examples of the character necessary to support a republic.



NOAH WEBSTER'S GOAL FOR AMERICA

Noah Webster's primary goal was to see America assume a "national character." He did not want Americans to look to Great Britain for the literature of Liberty that was uniquely American. Beginning at twenty-five years of age, for the next sixty years he endeavored to supply the nation with the tools of education which would enable them to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage." (Galatians 5:1)

What especially identifies the American character that Noah Webster brought forth in his educational program? From the first settlers who travelled to America, their pastors had admonished them to build their moral conduct upon the Bible. As Webster stated, "God's Word, contained in the Bible, has furnished all necessary rules to direct our conduct."

Biblical literacy also produced the necessity of spelling and writing in order to reason from Biblical and historical principles. Webster's famous *American Spelling Book* ("blue-backed speller") set a publishing record of one hundred million copies for one hundred years. This little inexpensive volume produced a unity among Americans in language, character, and Liberty unexcelled elsewhere.

GRANDPARENTS

Why Are Grandparents Key Influences in Their Families?

- Grandparents are usually free from the struggle of existence. They have succeeded and so, to a large degree, are more independent as to their time and occupation.
- Their values have been verified and fortified. They know how important what they have learned should be to their offspring.
- Their love of family has deepened.
- Their love of country has increased.
- Their understanding of the application of Biblical principles to life has become more and more important.
- They understand what changes are threatening their children.
- They sincerely want to prepare their grandchildren to live safe and healthy lives.

What Should Grandparents Teach Their Children and Grandchildren Today?

Ask yourself:

- I. Have my grandchildren mastered phonetic reading skills so that they are becoming more and more independent and able to research, reason, relate, and record what they are learning and what interests them? Our Noah Plan® teaches reading.



2. Can my grandchildren recognize the Biblical principles which are responsible for the Truths contained in the Declaration of Independence, namely, “that all men are created equal” and that we possess certain “unalienable” God-given rights to “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness?” Do they know that these God-given rights require “government by consent of the governed?”
3. Do my grandchildren know a “goodly company” of our founding fathers and mothers so that they, in turn might discuss them and describe their main accomplishments to today’s Americans?
4. And, do my grandchildren desire to contribute, in their own fields, some part of their individual lives and talents to help produce a better nation and world through propagating the principles which founded America?
5. Lastly, are we as grandparents sure that we have provided our grandchildren with the resources of American history, literature, and Biblical education that will enable them to fulfill God’s individual plan for their lives?

What We Must Teach the Present Generations to Preserve the Character of Our American Republic?

When the Bible is made the foundation of all that we think or do, then we are able to reason and teach by establishing Biblical principles or truths from God’s Word. It is called the “Principle Approach®.” This educational program, which was produced to teach America’s Christian history begins by restoring the Four R’s to teaching and learning:

- 1st R: The Researching of God’s Word to identify basic principles.
- 2nd R: Reasoning from these Biblical principles into all areas of life and into every subject of the curriculum.
- 3rd R: Relating Biblical principles to the character of each individual and the stewardship of God-given talents, to exercise Christian self-government in all fields.
- 4th R: Making a Record, or written report, of the research as a contribution to a field of study.

America’s historic Biblical education produced America’s Christian history and Constitution. The method was the Principle Approach. This same method will help us restore the foundation of American liberty.⁴

Many times we refer to teaching and learning as acquiring information, but it is much more than that. Noah Webster contrasted *information* and *knowledge* in his 1828 *Dictionary*. We might say that acquiring information tends to be *external*, while reaching a knowledge of a subject requires an *internal* inspiration of the heart and mind.



HOW SHALL WE BLESS THE GENERATIONS?

We bless this generation by establishing them in a Biblical foundation, teaching them Moses and his message for remembering God's Providence in their lives, the family, and the nation.

We must teach the leading idea of the westward course of the Gospel through the continents with the Christian idea of man and government.

We are called to teach them the Biblical principles of life (Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother, Lois) and liberty ("But I was freeborn . . ."); the Declaration of Independence (value of the individual); character (God's Principle of Individuality); and property ("Conscience is the most sacred of all property," [James Madison]).

Our grandchildren must know the Bible as the foundation of all subjects.

We must impart to them a knowledge of American history and constitutional government, teaching about God's chosen individuals for His Story.

¹ Roosevelt, Archibald B. and Sygmond Dobbs, *The Great Deceit: Social Pseudo-Sciences*. West Sayville, NY: Veritas Foundation, 1964.

² Slater, Rosalie J. *Teaching and Learning America's Christian History: The Principle Approach*. San Francisco, CA: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967, 53

³ Foljambe, Rev. S. W. in *The Christian History of the American Revolution: Consider and Ponder* by Verna M. Hall. San Francisco: CA Foundation for American Christian Education, 1975, 46–54.

⁴ Slater, 88–89.