

TREATMENT OF THE BIBLE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In the 17th-19th centuries, the Bible or parts of it were used as textbooks and devotional guides in public schools and colleges, and frequent references to the Bible were found in readers and other textbooks used in the schools and colleges. Colonial America's homes, churches, and schools among the Puritans, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, and others had strict regimens of services with strong emphases on Bible reading and prayer. The New England Primers of the 18th and 19th centuries and McGuffey's Eclectic Readers (1836-1920's) included many Bible passages and references. New England Primers (1777 and 1843 versions are available from Sacred Texts, Christianity on the web) had many passages of Scripture and even The Shorter Catechism (Anglican and Presbyterian) along with many prayers and many references to God, Christ, the Bible, and warnings against Satan in them. McGuffey's Readers (1836 into the 1920's and later had sold over 122,000,000 copies by 1920) had large blocks of Scripture in them Matthew 5-7, Acts 17, many whole Psalms, several chapters from Job, etc., as well as many prayers and references to God and Biblical morality in them.



All this has changed. Beginning in the 1800's a gradual lessening of Bible usage in schools and colleges occurred. During late 19th and the 20th and 21st centuries, Liberal attitudes toward God and the Bible developed in the U.S., especially among the educated and the religious leaders. When God is dethroned, His word becomes irrelevant to modern life. The Conservative Pilgrims, Puritans, Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, all would be horrified at the Liberalism that developed since the Civil War. Modernism, Old Liberalism, Neo-Orthodoxy, Humanism, Situational Ethics, Existentialism, and Post-Modernism are all names for Liberalism. Liberals see the Bible, Christianity, and religion in general to be useful mainly as good psychology and to promote humanitarianism as the Social Gospel. To the degree that men have adopted such Liberalism, the Bible is not mandatory; it cannot be used as absolute truth as the unchangeable and binding word of God. The result is a secular society that ignores God's existence, derides the Bible, and tries to get both God and the Bible out of modern life.

Humanism has intentionally used schools to change America, moving it away from the Bible to secularism. The Humanist Manifesto I in 1933 declared that "the time has passed for theism. . ." and that "modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values." They asserted that the universe has always existed, that natural development had brought about religion as well as all other things, and they laid plans to set the stage for using the public schools to indoctrinate whole generations with humanism, which is irreligion, infidelity, anti-God, and anti-Bible.

Why do Liberals even care if we Christians want to believe in God and honor and teach His Word? They could go their own way and let us go ours. The answer is that God and God's word criticizes their life style. Even the fact that the Christian life-style exists puts them in a bad light. It's the old story of Cain and Abel: Abel's life-style made Cain look bad without him having to say a word. Liberals now categorize as "hate crimes" our preaching against such sins as homosexual practices. That terminology can intimidate Christians, for those who continue to criticize sin may be arrested and prosecuted.

The humanist viewpoint is taught in teacher education programs that emphasize social activism instead of basics, the three R's. Then public school teachers produce students who are trained to be irreligious social activists. Lawyers, judges, and many students in colleges and universities are irreligious and have the Liberal bias against the Bible and for agnosticism, humanism, and socialism. The ACLU joins in fighting Bible

conservatives, as do most journalism schools and hence most journalists produced by those schools, our TV newscasters and newspapers. A majority of journalists view Biblical conservatives in the same light as they do Fox News and other conservative journalists; they see churches of Christ and other Bible believers as being out of touch with reality.

The result of this kind of thinking has been to remove the Bible from American public schools. The textbook writers followed the dictum of science that evolution must be taught and the Bible disregarded and even banned in public schools. They gradually removed references to the Bible and to God from textbooks in elementary and high schools, as well as from colleges. The Scott Foresman Company in 1911 and 1920 published the Elson Readers, which included many references to God, prayer, and Christian morality, but no Bible passages nor references to the Bible. The same company publishes the Dick and Jane books in modern times with no references to God, the Bible, or the Christian religion in them. Some elementary school curricula have been published and used in some states with the aim of making same-sex marriages and the homosexual life style acceptable by telling fictional stories about how loving and kind homosexual families are, but they do not extol Christian families or Biblical life-styles.

The U.S. Constitution does not use the expression Separation of Church and State, a phrase first used in the U.S. by Thomas Jefferson and now used to try to remove the Bible and Christianity from our schools. Our Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. The 1st Amendment says: Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . .” These two clauses have been interpreted as in conflict: the Establishment Clause prohibits government from favoring or sponsoring a specific religion or church, such as was done in England and Europe; the Free Exercise clause prohibits government interference with one exercising his religion. During most of the first two centuries of the United States, most legal experts and others understood the whole First Amendment to mean that the government cannot use tax dollars to establish and support one official, national religion but must allow religious freedom. However, during the last 60-70 years, U.S. courts, including the Supreme Court, have developed the theory that the First Amendment “was intended to create an impenetrable wall separating church and state, with absolutely no government involvement in religion” (Haas, 20-21). In a long series of decisions resulting from lawsuits by atheists and other anti-Christians, the U.S. Supreme Court and other U.S. and state courts have intimidated schools into banning the Bible and references to it from our public educational institutions. A later article will describe these court actions and their consequences.

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