

RELIGION, EDUCATION, AND INDIANA

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## RELIGION, EDUCATION, AND INDIANA

Whether or not religious education should be included in the curriculum of today's public schools is a very controversial issue. The discussion of religion and education has been carried on for years. A look at some historical information on this subject gives one much insight into the current problems. One can also see what schools can do and why religious education should be included. Also of interest is to look at what is being taught in the Indiana public schools and what is being done at the Indiana University Institute of Teaching the Bible in Literature Classes.

Horace Mann in the 1830's and 1840's seemed to set the precedent for Bible reading in school. He said, "Government should do all it can to facilitate the acquisition of religious truth, but shall leave the decision of the question what the truth is, to the arbitrament, without human appeal, of each man's reasons and conscience."<sup>1</sup> This meant that the Bible was read daily in the school without comment. Teachers didn't try to interpret to their students what they were reading.

Since Mann, much has been written and decided concerning the place of prayer, the Bible, and religion in the public schools. Many Supreme Court decisions have been made which directly or indirectly involved these issues. (see Appendix A) Especially interesting to the content of this paper, is the Schempp/Murray case which was decided in 1963. The Schempp/Murray case grew out of two separate cases each dealing with

religion in the public schools. The Schempp Case was based on a 1959 Pennsylvania law requiring that "at least ten verses from the Holy Bible shall be read, without comment, at the opening of each public school on each day. Any child shall be excused from such Bible reading, upon the written request of his parents or guardian."<sup>2</sup> The Schempp family protested this law as unconstitutional. The Murray Case was based on a Baltimore, Maryland School Board ruling of 1905 which "provided for the reading without comment, of a chapter in the Holy Bible and/or the use of the Lord's Prayer."<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Madalyn Murray, whose son attended school, protested this ruling as being unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court combined these two cases and decided on them simultaneously. In 1963, the Supreme Court declared that the reading of the Bible and the saying of prayers in the public schools were unconstitutional.<sup>4</sup> Needless to say, this decision by the highest court in the nation caused much discussion. Some people felt that the Court was completely right in the decisions. Others, however, felt that the Court was trying to turn their children into atheists by removing religion from the schools. Those who disagreed with the decision seemed to feel that the Court was forbidding prayer from the schools and completely removing the Bible from within the school walls. However, this is simply not so. Justice Tom Clark, in the majority opinion of the Court, stated,

It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.<sup>5</sup>

What did the Courts really say about religion and education?

Since there were many decisions made and many opinions going along with each decision, it may seem a difficult task to sort through all the vocabulary and get down to the true meanings and implications. It is important, however, to try to understand what is implied and not implied before one can discuss the subject intelligently. Too often people let their emotions rather than their intelligence talk and think for them when discussing religion and education. Both of these areas are emotion-filled areas and placing them together only increases the emotionality.

Intelligently,

It is important to note that the Supreme Court did not say that a student might not pray, but only that the school might not compel the student to pray. It seems that there must be no compulsion, direct or indirect, either to force a student to pray or to prohibit a student from praying. . . . So it is equally unconstitutional to restrain a student from praying or to compel him to pray.<sup>6</sup>

There is absolutely no way a court of any kind can force a student not to pray. If a student says a silent prayer, who will know? What the Court can do is restrain the school from sponsoring or leading prayers or Bible readings.

James Panoch, from Wright State University, outlines what the school may and may not do according to Supreme Court decisions as follows:

- 1) The school may sponsor the study of religion, but may not sponsor the practice of religion.
- 2) The school may expose the student to all religious views, but may not impose any particular view.
- 3) The school's approach to religion is one of instruction, not one of indoctrination.
- 4) The function of the school is to educate about religions, not to convert to any one religion.
- 5) The school's approach to religion is academic, not devotional.
- 6) The school should study what all people believe, but should not teach a pupil what he should believe.
- 7) The school should strive for student awareness of all religions, but should not press for student acceptance of any one religion.
- 8) The school should seek to inform the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to conform him to any one belief.<sup>7</sup>

The next question which might naturally arise is why our schools should bother with the study of religions at all. If something causes so much controversy, why not just forget about it? It would be a terrible error on the part of educators if they were to take the easy way out and just forget about it. However, they are not likely to be able to forget about it. Religion is a very large part of the culture of any group of people. To be able to study one's culture, one should be informed on the religions. There are religious influences everywhere and in many subject areas already in the school's curriculums such as music, art, and literature. Teachers should be able to utilize these instead of suppressing them. Of course, as religious studies are integrated more into such courses, teachers will have to become more familiar with these influences. As one author, Claire Cox, speaking on Biblical illiteracy says,

It tells us that young people - and presumably their parents - have no idea as to the source, meaning, or identity of stories, places, and people mentioned in the world's best-selling book which, although the least-read, has inspired more works of literature and art than any other single volume. Our culture is so rich in biblical allusions that the American Bible Society has compiled a list of nearly 3000 books, poems, plays, paintings, sculptures and musical scores whose creators have drawn on the Bible for titles or themes. If we are to understand what we are reading, listening to, or gazing upon, it would follow that we should have some idea as to its source.<sup>8</sup>

If we expect students to be able to understand these things, they must be given some knowledge and insight about the Bible and the major religions of the world.

Courses dealing with religious studies can be brought into the curriculum in various ways. They could be set up as elective courses such as a course in World Religions or Comparative Religions. They could be established as special units within a regular course such as a unit on the Old Testament Literature set up in an English course. Finally these

topics could be integrated into subjects such as science, art, music, literature, english, social studies, and history.<sup>9</sup> Many feel that this last way would be the best. Religion and its influences could be brought into many subjects and at all grade levels instead of waiting until Senior English to study the Bible as literature. The authors of Religion Goes To School feel this way. They state,

It is better to study religion in existing courses, either as a unit within a course or as an aspect of subjects under study. Including religion in every subject area and at every grade level is far more important than including it in a specific course at a specific time. The influences of religion and religious literature, both good and bad, should be included at every point in the curriculum where relevant to the subject under study and to a degree comensurate with the abilities of the student. More and better learning takes place when the elements under study are considered in their relation to each other. Students will have a better understanding of religion and religious literature when these are integrated into the curriculum.<sup>10</sup>

Teachers may have to do some studying themselves if such a course of action is undertaken. However, it will well be worth it if the students gain a better understanding of religious studies and other subjects influenced by religion.

Few states now offer certification for teachers in religious studies for the public schools. In fact, in 1973, only three states approved religion studies as an area for certification. These states are California, Wisconsin, and Michigan.<sup>11</sup> However, as this field is further developed and more courses introduced, there may be an increase in the number of states which offer teacher certification. In some of the larger secondary schools there may even be full time teachers in religious studies. In an article printed in a PERSC (Public Education Religion Studies Center) Newsletter, the following steps were recommended dealing with certification and teachers of religious studies.

1. State departments of education should give serious consideration to approval of religion studies as a normal subject area for teacher certification.
2. State departments of education, organizations, universities, and individuals concerned with religion studies in public education should join appropriate organizations and keep abreast of developments by attendance at regional and national meetings.
3. Institutional representatives interested in obtaining state approval for curricula in religion studies should approach their state department of education in an objective, matter - of - fact manner.
4. The major need appears to be for teachers who are already experienced and certified to be trained in religion studies education.
5. Employing officials in public or other schools where a non-sectarian approach to religion studies is desirable should give first consideration to graduates of state - approved or PERSC - endorsed programs if a full - time teaching schedule in religion studies is contemplated.<sup>12</sup>

While speaking of the need for teacher certification in religious studies, one should mention the National Council on Religion and Public Education (NCRPE). The Council was formed as a coalition of several organizations which were concerned with the studying of religion in the public schools. The purpose of the NCRPE is, "To provide a forum and means for cooperation among organizations and institutions concerned with those ways of studying religion which are educationally appropriate and constitutionally acceptable to a secular program of public education."<sup>13</sup> In the spring of 1976 the Council listed thirty - seven member organizations. These are listed in Appendix B.

It can be seen therefore, that there are many exciting things which could happen indirectly or directly related to the field of religious studies. J. Blaine Fister, in 1974, made some forecasts for the future of religious studies. These outlined are:

- A. Continued sectarian teaching
- B. More cooperation between state departments of education and universities
- C. Development of policies and programs between public education agencies

- D. Certification of teachers in religious studies
- E. Development of departments of religious studies at the secondary level
- F. New areas of study
  1. World Religions
  2. Ethnic Studies
  3. The Occult and the Supernatural
- G. Learning centers and self - instruction<sup>14</sup>

How closely has Indiana been following the trend toward more religious studies in the classroom? In 1914, a Biblical Literature course was begun in Indiana. In 1926, a text was published for this course by Dr. Jasper Huffman titled A Guide To The Study of The Old and New Testament. This same text was being used in 1963 when it was revised. In the 1930's and 1940's, this course became more popular. Then during the time of the Supreme Court rulings on some topics dealing with religion, the course was dropped. The course was picked up again in the 1960's.<sup>15</sup> This religious studies course is listed in the Digest of Courses of Study for the Secondary Schools of Indiana, published in 1961, and it is the only one of that kind listed. It is suggested that the Biblical Literature course be offered at grade eleven or twelve under the general course of English Expression and Appreciation. The course is designed to "acquaint the pupil with the Bible as a library of books closely associated in thought, philosophy, and purpose."<sup>16</sup> The purpose of the course is "to create interest in biblical lore and its influence upon the human race in all realms of human activity: aesthetic, moral, political, practical. To reveal the English Bible as great literature embracing every form of literary expression."<sup>17</sup> This was an early effort at establishing some kind of religious education in the Indiana public schools.

To find out what was actually being taught in Indiana public schools and the feelings of some school administrators on the topic, Dr. Daryl B. Adrian, Associate Professor of English at Ball State University,

along with some others, have conducted some surveys. During the spring of 1970, they sent questionnaires to 755 junior and senior high school principals in Indiana. Thirty - six percent of these (271 questionnaires) were returned with the following results:

1. 120 schools did not want more information on the issue of religion in our schools.
2. 151 schools did want more information on the issue.
3. 41 schools already offered courses on the Bible as Literature.
4. 20 schools offered courses in World Religions, units in Biblical Literature, etc.<sup>18</sup>

These surveys showed that of the 271 schools which responded, 22.5 percent of them offered some type of a religious studies course.

Another survey was conducted during the 1974-75 school year. This one was also conducted by Dr. Adrian, along with Walter F. Horlander and Malcolm Julian. 118 schools or school corporations responded to this survey. Fifty - eight of these schools did not offer any type of religious studies. The remaining sixty schools offered a variety of courses. The types of courses and number of schools offering them are as follows:

Literature of the Bible	
Old and New Testament both	47 schools
Old Testament only	3 schools
New Testament only	1 school
Comparative Religions	16 schools
Religion in Humanities	10 schools
History Surveys	13 schools
Other courses	4 schools

There were nineteen schools which offered more than one course in religious studies. There were twenty different basic texts used throughout the state with a wide variety of supplementary sources.<sup>19</sup> Another survey is presently being conducted by the Administrative Offices of the NCRPE. The survey covers such items as school/ corporation and administrator, location, teachers of the religious studies courses, their degrees, average enrollment in the classes, whether the course is a unit within a course or a

single course in a department and the title or type of courses actually offered.

There didn't seem to be much of an increase in the number of schools offering religious studies from 1970 to 1974. Sixty - one schools offered them in 1970 and only sixty in 1974. Of course, it must be taken into account that more schools may offer such courses, but didn't respond to the questionnaire.

When looking at religious studies in Indiana, we should now turn our attention to the Indiana University Summer Institute on Teaching the Bible in Secondary English Classes which is held during each summer. This program was founded and is led by Dr. James S. Ackerman. This program was started in 1970 with the help of funds from a Lilly Endowment. These funds gave "free room, board, fifty dollars book allowance, and tuition for six hours of graduate credit to forty - one participants in 1970 and seventy - five in 1972 and 1973."<sup>20</sup> Actually there were 410 requests for participation in the workshop in 1970, 650 requests in 1971 and 880 requests in 1972.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that, "The applications do not come from the 'Bible Belt', but rather mainly from the West and East Coasts and large suburban areas - from those schools which generally are the pace - setters in secondary school education."<sup>22</sup>

The institute lasts for two weeks during July and participants now receive four hours of graduate credit. The purpose of the workshop seems to be to prepare English and Literature teachers to be able to integrate the use of the Bible into their classes. Some of the areas covered during the institute are:

1. Biblical background (history, religion, and literature)
2. Literary analysis of biblical literature
3. Analysis of biblical influences on English and American literature

4. Discussion of curriculum, methods, legal implications, and religious sensibilities in the classroom.
5. Resources and professional help in selecting and using methods and media materials, and in preparing a unit or special project for use in your classroom.<sup>23</sup>

The faculty members of the institute have developed materials to go along with these classes. Most of these have been developed by Dr. Ackerman and Thayer Warshaw who is a high school English teacher in Newton, Massachusetts. Some of these materials are The Bible in Literature Classes series (Abingdon Press) and The Bible as/in Literature (Scott, Foresman).<sup>24</sup>

It should be clear to see from the large number of applicants who wish to attend these summer programs and the need for materials that there is indeed an interest in teaching religious studies in public schools in some form. It can be seen from all of these considerations that religious studies can't just be swept under the front mat of the schools. They are hopefully going to be taught, sooner or later, throughout the country. From the time of Horace Mann when the Bible was read without comment, until now has been quite an evolution. As Dr. Daryl B. Adrian states,

. . . we no longer are in the passive, quiet years of 40's, 50's, or 60's. . . . We should be content with no less than a comprehensive public school curriculum on all levels - elementary, secondary, and university - and that includes the legal, proper study of religion and religious literature.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps we will see a trend toward a comprehensive curriculum including religious studies. The coming decade should tell the story.

APPENDIX ASignificant Supreme Court Decisions on Cases Involving Religion and the Public Schools

<u>Case</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Disposition vote</u>
Everson v Board of Education	New Jersey	1947	busing	affirmed 5-4
McCullum v Board of Education	Illinois	1948	released time	reversed 8-1
Zorach v Clausen	New York	1952	released time	affirmed 6-3
Engel v Vitale	New York	1962	prayer	reversed 6-1
Abington v Schempp	Pennsylvania	1963	prayer and Bible reading	affirmed 8-1
Murray v Curlett	Maryland	1963	prayer and Bible reading	reversed 8-1 <sup>26</sup>

APPENDIX BMember Organizations of the National  
Council on Religion and Public Education

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, Arlington, VA  
 AMERICANS UNITED FOR SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE, Silver Spring, MD  
 ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS AND RESEARCHERS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, New York, NY  
 BALL STATE UNIVERSITY, Muncie, Indiana  
 BAPTIST JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS, Washington, DC  
 COLLEGE OF ST. SCHOLASTICA, Duluth, MN  
 COLLEGE THEOLOGY SOCIETY, Dayton, Ohio  
 ECUMENICAL STUDY COMMITTEE ON RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
 EDUCATION COMMITTEE ASSOCIATION, Washington, DC  
 EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF AMERICA, Cleveland, OH  
 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF EPISCOPAL CHURCH, New York, NY  
 FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, Tallahassee, FL  
 FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING, Pawling, NY  
 INDIANA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, Indianapolis, IN  
 INTEGRATED EDUCATION COMMITTEE, St. Johns, Newfoundland  
 INTERFAITH COMMITTEE ON RELEASED TIME, New York, NY  
 INTERFAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, Harrison, NY  
 LAYMEN'S NATIONAL BIBLE COMMITTEE, New York, NY  
 MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY, Milwaukee, WI  
 MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, Minneapolis, MN  
 NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS, New York, NY  
 NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC LAITY, Washington, DC  
 NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, New York, NY  
 NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF DIOCESAN DIRECTORS/CCD, Washington, DC  
 NORTH DAKOTA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES, Bismarck, ND  
 OHIO COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, Columbus, OH  
 PUBLIC EDUCATION RELIGION STUDIES CENTER, Wright State University, Dayton, OH  
 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, New Haven, CT  
 SOUTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY, Springfield, MO  
 W. CLEMENT STONE AND JESSIE STONE FOUNDATION, Chicago, IL  
 UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION, Boston, MA  
 UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
 UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, Nashville, IN  
 U.S. CATHOLIC CONFERENCE/DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, Washington, DC  
 VERMONT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOUNDATION, Burlington, VT  
 VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, INC., Richmond, VA  
 WISCONSIN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES- TASK FORCE ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION,  
 Madison, WI 27

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Thayer S. Warshaw, Religion, Public Education, and The Supreme Court, (Material published for the Indiana University Institute on Teaching the Bible), (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, rev. Spring, 1974), p.4.

<sup>2</sup>Louis Fischer and David Schimmel, The Civil Rights of Students, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 121.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>5</sup>Warshaw, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>David L. Barr and James V. Panoch, Religion Goes To School - A Practical Handbook For Teachers, (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>J. Blaine Fister, Teaching About Religion: In The Schools as an Option, (monograph #6 - Division of Education, United Methodist Board of Discipleship, 1974), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup>Claire Cox, The Fourth R - What Can Be Taught About Religion in the Public Schools, (New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1969), p. 129.

<sup>9</sup>Fister, p.8.

<sup>10</sup>Barr and Panoch, p. 26.

<sup>11</sup>Frank L Steeves, "State Approved Curricula in Religious Studies," PERSC Newsletter, vol.1, No. 2, (Winter 1974).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>National Council on Religion and Public Education Bulletin, (South Orange, New Jersey: The National Council on Religion and Public Education, Inc., Spring, 1976), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Fister, pp. 17-21.

<sup>15</sup>Cox, pp. 116-119.

<sup>16</sup>Digest of Courses of Study For the Secondary Schools of Indiana, (State of Indiana: Department of Public Instruction, 1961), p. 58.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Daryl B. Adrian, "A Comprehensive School Curriculum and the Study of Religion," in Religion and The Public School Curriculum, ed. Richard Upsher Smith (New York: Religious Education Association, 1972), p. 90.

<sup>19</sup>Resourcium on Religious Studies - As Curricular Options in the Common Schools of Indiana from Sixty schools or corporations that offer religious studies, (survey results), Daryl B. Adrian - Project Director, Walter F Horlander - Project Coordinator, Malcolm Julian - Survey Researcher, (Muncie, Indiana: Ball State University, 1975).

<sup>20</sup>James S. Ackerman, "The Indiana Summer Institute on Teaching the Bible in Secondary English," in Religion and the Public School Curriculum, ed. Richard Upsher Smith (New York: Religious Education Association, 1972), p. 93.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Teaching The Bible in Literature Courses (one page information sheet on the Indiana University Summer Institute on Teaching the Bible) (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 1976).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Adrian, p. 91.

<sup>26</sup>Barr and Panoch, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup>National Council on Religion and Public Education Bulletin, p. 15.

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