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IS RELIGION BANNED FROM OUR SCHOOLS?

A Special Studies Report
Presented to
Mr. Ralph Ford
Department of Education
Ouachita Baptist University

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by
Susan Ann Todd
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#293

IS RELIGION BANNED FROM OUR SCHOOLS?

Three hundred years ago Anglo-American teaching was done chiefly by the church. In early days English and American education was, in the main, created and sustained, inspired and controlled, by religious groups.¹ But, today, in the greater part of the Protestant world, at least, education is secular. The school has been, or is being, cut off from the church. With the exception of some "private" schools and colleges it has been taken over by another social institution. What institution is that?²

There can be no doubt that, with conscious intention or without it, Anglo-American Protestant civilization has drifted into an answer to that question. It is the state which is replacing the church. It is government, nation, provincial, or local, which has control of teaching.³ Education is not only becoming secular. It is also becoming political.⁴

¹Willard L. Sperry, Religion and Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), p. 1.

²"Religion in the Schools," The Columbia Encyclopedia (Morningside Heights, New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), vol. 1, p. 592..

³"Public Schools," Collier's Encyclopedia (New York: Crowell-Collier Education Corporation Press, 1968), vol. 19, p. 720.

⁴"Religion in the Schools," Encyclopaedia Britannica (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1965), vol. 7, p. 992.

From church to state? In three centuries we Protestants have transferred from one of these institutions to the other the task of shaping the minds of the characters of our youth. Do we realize what we have done? This is revolution.⁵ It was the church which first created and maintained the school. The churches were guardians of our "way of life."⁶ They were able to teach men and women and children how to live because they knew, as did no other institution, what life should be. They had beliefs and values which could be used for the concrete guidance and control of human behavior. Out of these beliefs and values, their control of education came.⁷

So because of these beliefs, we question whether the government can actually teach. The churches did not make a perfect job of this, but they had the purpose and spirit of teaching. As individuals we have feared the encroachments of government upon our rights, our liberties, our independence. This dread has been expressed by H. M. Tomlinson as he defines a human attitude in All Our Yesterdays:

"My church is down," I hear him saying. "My God has been deposed again. There is another god now, the State, the State Almighty. I tell you that god will be worse than Moloch. You had better keep that in mind. It has no vision; it has only expediency. It has no morality, only power. And it will have no arts, for it will punish the free spirit with death. It will allow no freedom, only uniformity. Its altar will be

⁵"Religion in the Classroom," Collier's Encyclopedia (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, Inc., 1953), vol. 16, p. 646.

⁶"Religious Education," The Encyclopedia Americana (New York: Americana Corporation, 1960), vol. 23, p. 352.

⁷Sperry, op. cit., p. 6.

a ballot-box, and that will be a lie. Right before us is its pillar of fire. It has a heart of gun metal and its belly is full of wheels. You will have to face the brute, you will have to face it. It is nothing but your worst, nothing but the worst of us, lifted up. The children are being fed to it."⁸

In the midst of all our agonies and uncertainties, a new world is being born. It is this new world which gives meaning to education. Every pupil must learn from it. Every teacher must be teaching for it. Every scholar must be thinking for it. Humanity is reasonable as well as unreasonable. It is the struggle between these two which defines the course of education. We know what teaching is only as we see and feel what the free spirit of man is trying to do and to be.⁹

. . . we think that the constitutional prohibition against laws respecting an establishment of religion must at least mean that in this country it is no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of American people to recite as part of a religious program carried on by government.¹⁰

This statement is found in the majority opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States in the now famous case of Engel v. Vitale, decided in June 25, 1962. This was not just an ordinary day in the history of American justice.¹¹

⁸Sperry, op. cit., p. 10.

⁹"Religion in the Classroom During the Year 1962," The Americana Annual (New York: Americana Corporation, 1963), p. 353.

¹⁰Sam Duker, The Public Schools and Religion (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), p. 1.

¹¹América, op. cit., p. 214.

The decision in that case outlawing the use of a prayer sponsored by the New York State Board of Regents¹² in the public schools of New Hyde Park, New York, aroused much controversy. Many people were sincerely disturbed, while others heartily approved of the outcome of the case. Needless to say, the lunatic fringe also found this an opportunity to have its say.¹³

Many Americans treated the event as if it were a surprise attack upon religion by self-willed judges who had acted without precedent.¹⁴ It is true that the banned prayer was so simple and so apparently innocuous that the controversy over it seemed like much ado about nothing. The prayer read:

"Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessing upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country."

(Quoted from Supreme Court decision, No. 468)¹⁵

President John F. Kennedy urged support of the decision and stressed that the proper place of prayer is in the home and the church rather than in the public schools.¹⁶ He did not indicate any positive liking for the Court's decision but he

¹²Paul Blanshard, Religion and the Schools (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 1.

¹³Robert Ulich, Religion and the Public Schools (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁴"Religion and the Classroom," Britannica Book of the Year (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1963), p. 335.

¹⁵Americana Year Book, op. cit., p. 214.

¹⁶Britannica Book of the Year, op. cit., p. 336.

advocated obedience. Being the first Catholic President in the United States, he was prepared for some sharp questioning about the prayer decision. On June 27, just two days after the big decision, the President said:

The Supreme Court has made its judgment, and a good many people obviously will disagree with it. Others will agree with it. But I think that it is important for us if we are going to maintain our constitutional principle that we support the Supreme Court decisions even when we may not agree with them.

In addition we have in this case a very easy remedy, and that is to pray ourselves; and I would think that it would be a welcome reminder to every American family that we can pray a good deal more at home and attend our churches with a good deal more fidelity, and we can make the true meaning of prayer much more important to the lives of all our children. That power is very much open to us. I would hope that as a result of this decision that all American parents will intensify their efforts at home, and the rest of us will support the Constitution and the responsibility of the Supreme Court in interpreting it.¹⁷

There was much national reaction to the Regents' prayer. Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower expressed his feelings toward the decision as follows:

I always thought that this nation was essentially a religious one. I realize, of course, that the Declaration of Independence ~~antedates~~ the Constitution, but the fact remains that the Declaration was our certificate of national birth. It specifically asserts that we as individuals possess certain rights as an endowment from our Creator--a religious concept.¹⁸

Former President Herbert Hoover was slightly more definite. Charging that the Supreme Court's decision represented "a disintegration of a sacred American heritage," Mr. Hoover

¹⁷Blanshard, op. cit., pp. 51-12.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 50.

said: "The Congress should at once submit an amendment to the Constitution which establishes the right to religious devotion in all governmental agencies--national, state, or local."¹⁹

Richard M. Nixon thought that there should be an amendment to the Constitution legalizing the use of non-sectarian prayers in public schools in order "to remind our children of our religious heritage."

Only a year later, in June 1963, did the Supreme Court clear up many of the questions that had arisen in the minds of students of the *Vitale* case and only then did they decide that a state cannot constitutionally hold religious exercises in public school classrooms even when the majority of the persons affected favor the exercises. At issue was the reading of passages from the Bible and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.²⁰

These two decisions aroused a storm of protest that still shows no signs of abating. Perhaps no controversy in the long history of America's public schools has evoked such an emotional backlash of anger and frustration or so divided public opinion.

Many devout Christian believers see the elimination of prayer, Bible-reading and religious instruction from public schools as a repudiation of Godly truth and a threat to the character of their children. The whole religion-and-schools controversy has been made more complex and more political by the fact that America's largest church, the Roman Catholic,

¹⁹Blanshard, op. cit., p. 51.

²⁰Duker, op. cit., p. 2.

does not accept the religious neutrality of the American public school system. Basically at issue is the question: To what extent will Americans stand for their public schools' being denuded of all emphasis on America's unique religious heritage and on religious values generally? That question remains to be answered.

Religious leaders were split in their reaction to a proposal to upset the Court's rulings. Most Roman Catholics were for it, most Jewish leaders against it; Protestants were about equally divided. However, the laity of all faiths heavily favored religious observances in public schools. A Gallup poll in August 1962 disclosed that 80 percent of American parents approved such observances. In general, the Baptist pronouncements on the prayer decision tended to be favorable to the Supreme Court. American Baptists, except in a few sections of the South, have defended church-state separation in the past almost as consistently as Unitarians and Jews. Dr. C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director in Washington of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, summed up a Baptist position rather neatly when he said:

When one thinks of prayer as sincere outreach of a human soul to the Creator, "required prayer" becomes an absurdity. The "recitation of prayer" has been called "morally uplifting" without recognizing that hypocrisy is the worst of moral corrosion. Some have felt that our "national heritage" is in danger, without realizing that the distinctive of our heritage is not legislated prayer but a people praying in freedom under the guidance of their church and of the Spirit of God.²¹

²¹Blanshard, op. cit., p. 64.

Billy Graham, America's most noted evangelist, a Baptist, went beyond the official words of the Court in his gloomy criticism:

This is another step toward the secularization of the United States. Followed to its logical conclusion, we will have to take the chaplains out of the armed forces, prayers cannot be said in Congress, and the President cannot put his hand on the Bible when he takes the oath of office. The framers of our Constitution meant we were to have freedom of religion, not freedom from religion.²²

The most publicized opposition to the prayer decision in Protestant circles came from James A. Pike, Episcopal Bishop of California. "The Supreme Court," he said, "has deconsecrated the nation."²³

To pray or not to pray was a question that caused school people to react variously. While representative bodies such as the National Education Association accepted the Court decision without official protest, many state and local boards of education either openly defied the rulings or quietly pursued their former practices.

May a patriotic song, for example, the fourth verse of America, or a historical document like the Declaration of Independence be used as a prayer? The State Department of Education of New York State has issued a ruling that forbids this procedure.²⁴

Some school boards used dodges to keep within the letter

²²Blanshard, op. cit., p. 65.

²³Ibid., p. 66.

²⁴Duker, op. cit., p. 24.

of the law. They would substitute for prayer the daily recitation of the first and fourth stanzas of "The Star-Spangled Banner" or "America."

Many school officials leaned over backward to play it safe. Many teachers dropped all activities about which there was the slightest chance of controversy.

A highly sensitive and controversial issue arises in many schools every year concerning the observation of such religious holy days as Christmas, Hanukkah, Easter, and Passover. Many school administrators have ruled out the presence of Christmas trees in the classroom, Easter bulletin boards, or any other religious symbols. The presentation of school programs in connection with these holidays have also been banned.²⁵ Last year in a school in South Dakota, a school Christmas program was interrupted because of the singing of "Silent Night." The question of baccalaureate services in the schools has never been decided.²⁶

Behind all the agitation lies a deep public concern over the Court's decrees. Testimony taken at last year's Congressional hearings on a proposed amendment to the Constitution disclosed a conviction on the part of many Americans, including experts on constitutional law, that the Supreme Court had erred.

By reading into the First Amendment's prohibition of "any law respecting an establishment of religion" much more than its authors intended, the Court had in effect "amended the

²⁵Duker, op. cit., p. 25.

²⁶"The Challenge of a Pro," A Stoppage Album, 1970.

amendment"--not only usurping powers belonging to lawmaking bodies but arrogating to itself decisions traditionally left to local and state school authorities. By forbidding Bible-reading and prayer, as well as any and all "religious exercises," the Court had, in the words of Princeton's Prof. Edward S. Corwin, a leading authority on constitutional law, "itself promulgated a law prohibiting the free exercise of religion."

By pronouncing, for the first time in American history, the absolutist dogma that as between religion and irreligion the state is firmly committed to a position of neutrality, the Court was, in the words of Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike, establishing by judicial fiat a religion of secularism. This is surely a doctrine foreign to a land whose founders regarded religion as the bulwark of the state, who saw themselves accountable to "the Supreme Judge of the world," and whose citizens' rights to freedom and self-rule were "endowed by their Creator."

Criticizing the Court's decree, Erwin N. Griswold, dean of the Harvard Law School, said, "This is a Christian country, in origin, history, tradition and culture. It was out of Christian doctrine and ethics that it developed its notion of toleration. The Muslim who comes here may worship as he pleases, and may hold public office without discrimination. But why should it follow that he can require others to give up their Christian tradition merely because he is a tolerated and welcome member of the community?"²⁷

²⁷Ulich, op. cit., p.30-31.

The Bible has always been the core of religious instruction as well as the star of all religious ceremonials in American schools. It lies at the heart of the Protestant tradition. Regardless of whatever legal, constitutional or theoretical argument may be used by the Supreme Court to eliminate Bible-reading in the public schools such an act would be taken by many millions of people as a decree of hostility to religion and as a decision based on a factitious interpretation of the constitution.²⁸

The ban on the reading of the Bible comes from the Federal Government. In fact, it is another case of the United States Supreme Court making legislation. The Statutes of Arkansas have the following provisions concerning Bible reading and prayer in the public schools:

80-1606. Bible to be read daily--Prayer. -- Every teacher or other person in charge shall provide for the reverent daily reading of a portion of the English Bible without comment in every public tax-supported school up to and including every high school in the State in the presence of the pupils; and prayer may be offered or the Lord's prayer repeated; Provided, that no pupil shall be required to take part, and that any pupil shall be excused from the recitation on written request of a parent or guardian.

80-1607. Penalty for violations. -- Every teacher or other person in charge of any public tax-supported school up to and including every high school in this State who shall willfully violate the terms of this act shall be subject to a fine of not more than twenty-five dollars (\$25) for each offense and upon a second conviction, the position held by such teacher or

²⁸Blanshard, op. cit., p. 96.

other person shall automatically become vacant and any contract for the services of such teacher or other person shall become null and void.²⁹

Although the recital of the Lord's Prayer in public schools is one of the most widely employed religious practices, there is little clear-cut law pertaining to this practice. It is considered a prayer accepted by all religions and thus there are no laws prohibiting it.

Americans, going to their history books, found little support for the notion that "separation of church and state" meant separation of religion from government. Thomas Jefferson believed that not only a nation's moral base rested on religion, but its civil liberties, too. "Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure," he demanded, "when we have removed their only firm basis: a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gifts of God?"

America's founders not only recognized the existence of God but wrote that recognition into their founding documents. Onto the new nation's coinage went words later adopted as the national motto: "In God We Trust." Into the Great Seal went Latin legends asserting that "God has favored the undertaking." Into the nation's patriotic songs went expressions of national dependence upon God; some of the stanzas are actually prayers in song.

Acknowledgment of America's strong religious base abounded in virtually every state constitution. Chaplains were officially

²⁹A. W. Ford, Commissioner of Education, State of Arkansas Department of Education, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1970.

appointed to all lawmaking bodies. Religious oaths were required for officeholders, religious exercises ordered for official ceremonies. To encourage the spirit and practice of religion, tax laws exempted church property and allowed deductions for gifts to religious causes; U.S. postal regulations granted special rates to religious magazines; draft exemptions were made for clergymen and divinity students. In contrast with Justice William J. Brennan Jr.'s dictum that "government may not support or directly aid religious activities," all the foregoing do precisely that.³⁰

Against this background, many Americans questioned how the Court could possibly affirm that, as between religion and irreligion, this is a "state firmly committed to neutrality." Even some justices of the Court had misgivings about so sweeping a commitment. Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, joined by Justice John Marshall Harlan, wrote in his concurring opinion: "Untutored devotion to the concept of neutrality can lead to a pervasive devotion to the secular and to a passive or even active hostility to the religious. Such results are not only not compelled by the Constitution but are prohibited by it."³¹

Newspaper comment was even more blunt. The Cincinnati Enquirer put its finger on the real reason for Americans' concern: "They don't like to be pushed around in religious matters; they don't like to be denied what they regard as

³⁰Robert F. Drinan, S. J., Religion, The Courts, and Public Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963), p. 99.

³¹Ibid., p. 101.

historic rights. Most of all, they are disturbed by the receding role of religion in the nation's official life when immorality and corruption and apathy about waning standards of conduct seem almost rampant in the land."

Following the 1962 decision ruling out the New York State Regents' nonsectarian prayer, The Wall Street Journal editorialized, "Only a violent wrenching of language can produce the interpretation that the prayer establishes a religion. It does not augur well for the future to see our highest judges torture history and turn metaphysical handsprings to justify that which they wish to decide."³²

The New York Herald Tribune snapped, "Prayer in public schools should not be discussed as if it were some malignancy injurious to a child's well-being." Then it fell to worrying editorially whether the Court's anti-prayer reasoning, if carried on to its logical (or illogical) conclusion would not lead to the elimination of all prayers and religious comment from other public institutions and ceremonies.

Many Americans were persuaded that only a constitutional amendment would halt the anti-religious trend. Former President Herbert Hoover, who called the Court's ruling on school prayers an affront to "one of the most sacred of American heritages," said, "The Congress should at once submit an amendment to the Constitution which establishes the right of religious devotion

³²Drinan, op. cit., p. 100.

in all government agencies--national, state, or local.

Joining in the demand for an amendment were almost all of the 50 state governors, who at their 1962 annual conference resolved to urge the Congress to make clear and beyond challenge the acknowledgment by our nation and people of their faith in God, and permit the free and voluntary participation in prayer in our public schools--a resolution reaffirmed at their 1963 meeting.

Congressional reaction was immediate. Into the legislative hopper went not fewer than 154 resolutions calling for amendment. Hearings on these resolutions before the House Judiciary Committee in mid-1964 lasted seven weeks, took 2774 pages of testimony from hundreds of individuals and groups, provoked endless headlines and editorials--and left most Americans as divided, confused and frustrated as ever.³³

The trouble was with the wording. Almost all the proposed resolutions were too narrow in scope, their aim limited to restoring the right of voluntary devotions in schools and other public places. The simplest and least-involved suggestion came from Bishop Pike who proposed that the amending be limited to a clarification of the establishment provision, making it read: "Congress shall make no law respecting the recognition as an established church of any denomination, sect or organized religious association."³⁴

³²Drinan, op. cit., p. 103.

³³Blanshard, op. cit., p. 65-66.

In Congress, calls are already being made for additional hearings on this and other proposed amendments. However, it is doubtful that the battle to upset the Court decisions by constitutional amendment will be renewed in sufficient strength.

From what kind of activities in the public school classroom may an individual be excused because of religious scruples? There have been many cases in court concerning the pledging of allegiance to the flag.³⁴ Some people have a belief that you should pledge allegiance only to God.³⁵ The members of the Jehovah's Witnesses sect found that participation in this ceremony was in conflict with their religious belief. But we must remember that they represent only a small sector of our population.³⁶

Those in favor of the requirement that all children participate in the daily flag salute had this argument in favor of the regulation:

The refusal of the children to salute the national flag at school exercises because they believed that to do so would violate the written law of Almighty God as contained in the Bible was not founded on a religious belief. . . .

The act of saluting the flag has no bearing on what a pupil may think of his Creator. Nor is a pupil required to exhibit his religious sentiments in a particular "form of worship" when saluting the flag, because the ceremony is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a "form of worship."

³⁴Duker, op. cit., p. 27.

³⁵"Joe Doesn't Pledge Allegiance," Today's Education (Washington, D.C.: Educational Press Association, November, 1968), p. 63-64.

³⁶"A Unit on Religion," NEA Journal (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, January, 1968), p. 35.

Like the study of history or civics or the doing of any other act which might make a pupil more patriotic as well as teach him or her "loyalty to the State and National Government," the salute has no religious implications. . . . The commandments of Jehovah, as set forth in the Bible, do not prohibit the saluting of a national flag but on the contrary approve of that practice.

The act of saluting the flag is only one of many ways in which a citizen may evidence his respect is shown the American flag when it passes in a parade; yet that it not a religious rite.

Though members of Jehovah's Witnesses endeavor to extend religious implications to a ceremony purely patriotic in design, they do not accord to others the religious freedom which they demand for themselves, claiming that there is no limit to which they may go when they think they are worshipping God. . . .

The act of saluting the flag does not prevent a pupil, no matter what his religious belief may be, from acknowledging the spiritual sovereignty of Almighty God by rendering to God the things that are God's. . . .³⁷

There were also those who had an argument against the validity of the regulation. They said:

The rule compelling respondents to participate in the ceremony of saluting the flag and the act of its School Board in expelling them because they refrained, violate their rights guaranteed by . . . the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

The vital question is: Shall man be free to exercise his conscientious belief in God and his obedience to the law of Almighty God, or shall man be compelled to obey the law or the State, which law, as the creature conscientiously believes, is in direct conflict with the law of Almighty God?

This Court has repeatedly held that the individual alone is privileged to determine

³⁷Duker, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

what he shall or shall not believe. The law, therefore, does not attempt to settle differences of creeds and confessions, or to say that any point or doctrine is too absurd to be believed. . . .

Will any court attempt to say that respondents mistakingly believe what is set forth in the twentieth chapter of Exodus in the Bible? The belief of the respondents is not based on conjecture or myth. Respondent's belief is based strictly on the Bible.

The saluting of the flag of any earthly government by a person who has covenanted to do the will of God is a form of religion and constitutes idolatry.

The rule certainly abridges the privileges of the respondents and deprives them of liberty and property without due process of law.

Petitioners claim that the purpose of saluting the flag is to "instill in the children patriotism and love of country." But why limit that compulsory rule to teachers and pupils of the public schools?³⁸

The Court rules that any member of a religious sect having religious scruples against pledging allegiance to the flag need not participate.

The question remains: How are we to restore to our schools-- and to all public life--the recognition of religion's place in our society?

The answer lies in a scarcely noted paragraph by Associate Justice Tom C. Clark in the majority opinion: "It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its

³⁸Duker, *sup. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

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 consistent with the First Amendment."

The challenge was plain: if teaching or religion in public schools was banned, teaching about religion was clearly encouraged. And in that challenge lay potential gains vital to both religion and education.³⁹

Over the years, teaching about religion has fallen to a low estate, and skittish school authorities have increasingly dropped all emphasis on the role of religion in civilization. The result, said Walter Lippmann, is "a moral and intellectual vacuum at the center of education."

Prominent religious figures such as Dr. George A. Buttrick, of Garrett Theological Seminary, have often deplored the vacuum. Finding in the schools "almost no room given to study about religion," said Buttrick, "we have by our silence indoctrinated children to believe that God does not exist. Or if He does exist, He doesn't matter--at least not enough to risk religious controversy."⁴⁰ We teach the literature of Shakespeare: why not teach the literature of the Bible? We teach the life and

³⁹ Christian Gauss, The Teaching of Religion in American Higher Education (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1951), p. 125.

⁴⁰ Conrad Henry Moehlman, School and Church; The American Way (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), p. 135.

sayings of Benjamin Franklin; why not the life and sayings of Jesus Christ?"

Can the Bible be returned to the classroom?⁴¹ What advocates of the formal teaching of religion in the public schools fail to appreciate is that the Bible which disappeared from the classroom as a religious text in the late nineteenth century has also disappeared from history. The dogmatic Bible of yesterday has evolved into the historical Bible of today. But the Bible historically evaluated can never be harmonized with the Bible verbally inspired in every "i" and "t".⁴²

The formal teaching of the Bible in the American classroom faces many dilemmas. The Bible historically understood is exceedingly dangerous to the inherited traditional faith of the American child, whether in a Catholic or an orthodox Protestant church. On the other hand, the majority of the American people would not long permit a "sectarian Bible" to remain in public education. Again, the Bible is a very difficult book to understand.⁴² No public school teacher could so teach the Bible as to make her findings understood or acceptable to even a fraction of the religious groups represented in the average metropolitan classroom.⁴³

⁴¹ Moshlman, op. cit., p. 120.

⁴² Ibid., p. 121.

⁴³ "Bible Reading in the Schools," The Lincoln Library (Buffalo, New York: The Frontier Press Company, 1951), p. 1693.

But if we do not have any religious training in the schools, there must be a way found for churches to become more effective in the American way of life. But this training should not be to the extent that Sunday School and church will have no meaning to a child. For the child who never attends a church, some religious training in the school would be beneficial.⁴⁴

The chief function of the school concerning religion should be to supplement the training of the home and intensify in the child that love for home is the mark of true character training and the sure guarantee of a country's welfare. So the program of the public schools should reinforce the program of the home and church in strengthening belief in God.⁴⁵

A teacher needs knowledge about religion in order that his knowledge of his own subject field may be complete. It has been said that we would tear history and literature into shreds if we tried to remove all traces of religion from our schools.⁴⁶

There are also many problems that arise in the question of religion in higher education. The provisions for religion on the campus of a state university seem to fall outside the

⁴⁴ Superior Court of Cincinnati, The Bible in the Public Schools (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1870), p. 419.

⁴⁵ Joseph Politella, Religion in Education (Oneonta, New York: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1956), p. 68.

⁴⁶ A. L. Sebaly, Teacher Education and Religion (New York: The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1959), p. 70.

legal and theoretical prohibitions set up by those who are fearful or by those who are disinterested. They are nonsectarian, dignified, and altogether consistent with the high purposes of institutions of higher education. Too many institutions within the category of the "publicly supported" are spending all their time emphasizing the reasons for not doing anything about religion. It would be more fruitful for them to search out those things they can do and then do them.⁴⁷

The American educational plan is twofold: tax-supported universal public education, and the recognition of values in and a benevolent attitude toward private schools.⁴⁸

The financial crisis facing education, caused by the unparalleled increase in population as well as by the needs of a technological age for trained personnel, is generally recognized as being very real. One solution not unanimously but generally agreed upon would be federal financial aid. This is not the place for an extended discussion of the arguments for and against federal aid for church-related schools or public schools. But one may point out that the absolute necessity in our technological era for educated workers combined with the high rate of mobility of our American population makes education of prime quality a matter of national rather than merely a state concern. The sad fact is that those states providing the most inadequate educational facilities are spending a larger amount

⁴⁷Gauss, op. cit., 153.

⁴⁸Moehlman, op. cit., p. 128.

of their financial resources for education than are those with more satisfactory educational facilities. Federal aid could resolve this problem.⁴⁹

For many years bills proposing such federal aid have been introduced in Congress and just as often have failed to pass. Their failure can readily be attributed to an impasse between two groups. One faction insists that any aid given to public schools should be appropriated in equal proportions to non-public school children. The legality for this proposal is claimed on the basis of the child-benefit theory. The other faction insists with equal vehemence that any aid to other than public schools would be a violation of the Establishment Clause and would sound the death knell to American public education. One's opinion on the relative merits of these viewpoints does not affect the fact that federal aid to education bills are unlikely to be passed by the Congress in the foreseeable future unless some accommodation is reached between these viewpoints.⁵⁰

Education's higher echelons, too, have shown concern over the vacuum. Recently the American Association of School Administrators, which includes almost all superintendents of local and state school systems, appointed a special commission and charged it with producing a set of guidelines for those who establish school policy.

⁴⁹Duker, op. cit., pp. 220-222.

⁵⁰"Religious Training in the Classroom," The Lincoln Library (Buffalo, New York: The Frontier Press Company, 1969), p. 1690.

Meanwhile, many teachers and school boards are devising their own ways and means to do the job. Teaching the Bible as literature has perhaps won more practitioners than any other. In Indiana, almost two thirds of the public schools use the Bible in their literature classes, and a course in "Biblical literature" is an authorized elective for high school students. Many secondary schools across the country have introduced courses in comparative religion. In Georgia, the state board of education asserts, most teachers are now including the Bible as a text in literature courses.

Teachers of history are making similar efforts. In California, public school teachers are now required to include in their courses appropriate study of the role of religion in the story of mankind. In Texas, history teachers stress the relationship of church and state in the United States by discussing it in terms of specific cases reaching the courts.⁵¹

Sociology offers another field wide-open to a study of religion's role in human affairs. One project tested successfully in New York schools divided sociology classes into small discussion groups, with Protestant, Catholic and Jewish students asked to explain their own faiths. Afterward, students wanting more information on their own or others' faith framed questions which were then passed on to clergymen invited to lecture the class. In other schools, teachers of sociology take their students on visits to local churches and synagogues to learn

⁵¹"Religious Education," The World Book Encyclopedia (Chicago: Field Enterprises, Inc., 1968), vol. 14, p. 6869.

of different religious practices. One reports: "This almost always promotes tolerance and respect for the different groups, without in any way weakening the student's own faith."

Though there is a very fine line between advocating a specific point of view and teaching, impersonally and objectively, facts about religion, many teachers exercising common sense and good manners, have proved they can handle this delicate task with propriety, fairness and objectivity.

Many of the practices held to be objectionable under the terms of the First Amendment by the Supreme Court will nevertheless continue in the classrooms of many public schools for some time to come.⁵² A Supreme Court decision is not self-enforcing and when such a procedure is not challenged there is nothing to prevent its continuance. In religiously homogeneous communities such challenges probably will never be made. Since, under such circumstances, no one is offended, probably no great harm can result. If, however, no objection is made by a minority because of pressure from the majority the situation is indeed most unfortunate and renders void the protection offered such minorities by our Bill of Rights.⁵³

In the last analysis the problems arising in a society marked by religious diversity cannot be resolved by court decisions. Often these decisions will exacerbate rather than ease tensions. Differences are accentuated and agreements

⁵²The World Book Encyclopedia, op. cit., p. 6870.

⁵³Duker, op. cit., 227.

minimized in the controversies that court decisions arouse.

What is needed in our society as a whole, but especially in matters pertaining to our schools, is a spirit of understanding and consideration toward those who hold religious views different from or even contrary to our own. Such a spirit must go far beyond that of tolerance for diverse views. A spirit of accommodation is, of course, as necessary on the part of those holding minority views as it is on the part of those professing generally accepted beliefs and views. Re-
criminations and reproaches will not solve any portion of our problem but frank discussions may. Above all else a free flow of information is essential. This free flow will prevent one cause of much irritation--disputes about matters that don't exist.⁵⁴

If school people are up to its implied challenge, the Supreme Court's decisions may well turn out to have done more for both education and religion than all the legislative hearings and church pressures together. School people should not get to work at building a curriculum that will lead young people to a steadily broadening understanding of the role religion plays in the affairs of mankind.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Duker, op. cit., pp. 227-228.

⁵⁵Anderson, op. cit., p. 35.

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