spotlight on TEACHING

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## IN THIS ISSUE

*Spotlight on Teaching about Religion in the Schools*





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# Spotlight on Teaching *about* Religion *in the* Schools

*Bruce Grelle and D. Keith Naylor, Guest Editors*

## Multiculturalism and the Academic Study of Religion in the Schools

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MULTICULTURALISM remains a highly debated topic in academic circles, but much of that debate ignores religion as an important feature of the world's cultures. However elusive and controversial the definition of multiculturalism, as a curricular matter, it involves at minimum the study of diverse cultures and their meaning in human history. Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, noted recently in *Diversity Digest*[1] that the academy is convinced, "that citizens now need to acquire significant knowledge both of cultures other than their own and of disparate cultures' struggles for recognition and equity..." The academic study of religion is an integral part of such knowledge. My work assisting teachers in learning how to teach about religion in the schools has convinced me that the study of religion has much to contribute to the emphasis on multiculturalism throughout our educational system.

Over the last five years, I have worked with secondary school teachers in Southern California through the California 3Rs Project (Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect), a project helping teachers to teach about religion in a way that is constitutionally permissible and educationally sound. My role has been to offer workshops on teaching about American religious history, helping teachers to identify places in their established curricula where they can develop study units on religion. In the absence of inclination and space in most secondary programs to offer separate courses in religious studies, my goal has been to encourage teachers to pay attention to religion in American history.

In working with teachers, I have been concerned especially with noting the presence and influence of religion in America beyond the Puritan colonies, and the California missions, both of which seem to be stopping places, literally. For instance, to have teachers study the succession of the founders' religious liberty generation by the 19th century evangelical benevolence empire with its agencies and reforms would be a breakthrough; to have them explore the efforts of the U.S. Roman Catholic leadership to establish parochial schools in answer to Protestantism in public schools in the same period would be a major success. An examination of the forging of independent black churches as touchstones of identity and power for blacks in that period would be a further advance in learning. As we study the presence and participation of the many cultural groups in American history, so too must we study religious traditions in plural, including the world's religions that have "immigrated" to America.

The teachers I have worked with have been invariably bright, energetic, and committed to education, but few of them have had any formal exposure to the academic study of religion. Those who have responded to the state education standards mandating the study of religion can be considered as not only dedicated, but heroic. They operate under conditions of anxiety and are sometimes pressured by suspicion regarding religion from superintendents, principals, colleagues, parents, and students. They work in settings where religion is a highly charged subject even as it is largely absent as a curricular subject. Their classrooms reflect the great racial, ethnic, class, cultural, and religious diversity of Southern California, and indeed of the world. How can we professors of religious studies help to develop with secondary school teachers a multicultural curriculum, a curriculum as rich as the background of the students and teachers in the classroom?

Clearly, teachers need many resources to teach about religion. They need textbooks, such as the Oxford University Press series, Religion in American Life, to which our fellow professors have contributed. They need audio-visual materials, such as *On Common Ground: World Religions in America* (by Diana Eck and

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# Guidelines on Religion in Public Schools: An Historic Moment

*Marcia Beauchamp*

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BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, the need to address religion and religious perspectives in the curriculum and throughout the school culture was not high on the educational agenda of many schools. Perhaps now that will change.

The tragic events of that day are a clear reminder that religion matters. It matters in a world torn by conflict over religious differences. And it matters in our nation — the most religiously diverse place on Earth. From the sublime examples of abiding faith found in the stories of suffering families to the ugly attacks on American Muslims (and others mistaken for Muslims), religion is suddenly front and center in America's public square.

Of course, it shouldn't take a national crisis or outbreaks of hate and ignorance to get educators to notice how poorly religion is addressed in America's public and private schools. We have known about our failure to include religion in the curriculum for more than a decade through multiple textbook studies, and periodic reports from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Council for the Social Studies, and others.[1] Only in the last few years have textbooks and schools even begun to address religion, while most schools of education continue to ignore it altogether.[2] We have also known for some time that our diverse student populations have many religious needs and requirements that schools must do more to accommodate.

On December 17, 1999, President Clinton used his radio address to announce that the US Department of Education would send religious liberty guidelines to every public school in the nation.[3] Although largely ignored by the media, this action by the president is nothing less than historic. For the first time in American history, every school will have consensus guidelines on the religious-liberty rights of students, the appropriate role for religion in the curriculum, and partnerships between faith communities and public schools.

## A Growing Concern

The packet of guidelines from the US Department of Education represents the culmination of 15 years of hard work by many religious and educational groups, representing a broad spectrum of views. It is the most important and comprehensive step to date in the effort to get beyond the controversy and conflict that has characterized the "religion and schools" debate for many years. Much of the confusion about these issues may be traced to a misunderstanding and misapplication of the Supreme Court's decisions of the early 1960's, striking down state-sponsored prayer and devotional Bible reading in public schools.[4] The political rhetoric surrounding these decisions convinced many Americans, including many school administrators, that religion and religious expression had no place in public schools. Fear of controversy also led many textbook publishers largely to ignore the role of religion in history and other subjects.

By the mid-1980's, however, the tide began to turn. Textbook studies by both liberal and conservative groups, as well as textbook trials in Alabama and Tennessee, highlighted the need for schools to take religion more seriously. Lawsuits proliferated on both sides of the debate. From the right, conservative Christians challenged school policies they believed unconstitutionally banned student religious speech during the school day. From the left, civil libertarians and separationists challenged school practices (particularly in the rural South), they saw as continuing to involve school officials in promoting religion.

Political pressure to address the problem of public schools as "religion-free zones" led to the passage of the Equal Access Act in 1984, which was upheld as constitutional by the US Supreme Court in 1990.[5] For many conservatives, this legislation represents a major breakthrough in the effort to allow for student religious expression in public schools.[6]

While the Equal Access Act opened the door to student religious expression, it did not answer the many other questions about religious liberty rights of students, and it did nothing to address the question of religion in the curriculum.

## Building A New Consensus

In the wake of the textbook studies and controversies, a collection of diverse religious and educational groups decided we could do better on issues of religion in the public schools. In an effort to move us beyond the fights of the past, this group of organizations met to develop guidelines regarding some unresolved issues.[7]

In an effort to demonstrate that consensus already existed on the many ways to address religion in the schools, several important pamphlets were produced by this coalition. *Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers*[8], *Religious Holidays in the Public Schools*[9], and *Equal Access and the Public Schools; Questions and Answers*[10] are all products of this diverse coalition's work together.

The way in which these documents were created is as important as what they say.

See **GUIDELINES**, p.4

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**MULTICULTURALISM**, from p.1

the Pluralism Project at Harvard), a series with tremendous multimedia capability for teaching and learning. Teachers need online news updates that reinforce the currency and liveliness of the world's religions. But I think the most urgent need among teachers is knowledge about how to approach the study of religion. The most important thing we can offer is exposure to the various methods of religious studies, articulation of the interdisciplinary nature of the field, and some understanding of the cautions and debates surrounding those methods, including the unsettled issue of what constitutes religion. Through pre-service education school courses, in-service training, and enrichment seminars, we can work with teachers to strengthen their expertise and their confidence in teaching religious studies. As they gain a better picture of the academic study of religion, they can begin to uncover the connections between history, culture, and religion in material that they already know. As we share with teachers our dilemmas in teaching difficult themes — religious conflict, for instance — they can learn from our approaches and gain confidence in doing the same.

Sharing our experience of studying religion as a complex topic can be highly valuable to teachers. I remember, for example, the first time I presented the late Ninian Smart's "dimensions of religion" to a group of teachers. They felt almost a sense of revelation concerning the multifaceted nature of religion as a topic for study, and felt released from dwelling on religion as only a "system of belief." Thinking about the dimensions of religion gave them a chance to occupy a space in which theological questions were decidedly part of a larger conception of religion. The teachers were free to explore religion as it lodges in culture, to explore religion as it does an extended dance with culture: the partners often not totally distinguishable, but the dance visible and compelling. Similarly, talking with teachers about religion as "omni-directional," within society, capable both of aligning with the status quo and moving with revolutionary movements, and occupying many sites in between, opens up a conception of religion that allows teachers to consider religion more comprehensively.

The diversity of human groups and their ways of creating and sustaining meaning have long been recognized by religious studies. Our field was born in the late 19th century, in the image of comparative religion. The striking primary claim of the early comparative religions approach was that religion was various, and deserved to be studied in its variety and complexity. However hegemonic and problematic the stance of the early comparative religions approach, the acknowledgment of the diversity of world religions and of their consequence was a major step toward what may be called a multicultural perspective.

As religious studies scholars, we have expertise that can be helpful to secondary school teachers addressing multiculturalism. Many of us entered the field precisely because of our fascination with the intersection of religion and culture, and with the varied nature of religion. We nurture in our classrooms a sensitivity toward and respect for various religious traditions, and an openness to the meaningfulness of religion to its adherents. In the century-long transition from a comparative religion perspective to a religious pluralism perspective, we have had to grapple with issues of neutrality, objectivity, cultural bias, and critical standards, among others. We have wrestled with the enigmatic issues of secularization and modernity, both of which are relevant to multiculturalism. As religious studies professors, we have had to study a topic whose actual definition eludes our agreement, and we have produced important knowledge under those conditions. Further, our experience as scholars who are sometimes marginalized in our own institutions because of our topic of study can help to advance an understanding of marginalization as it occurs in other contexts. This is a key issue for multiculturalism.

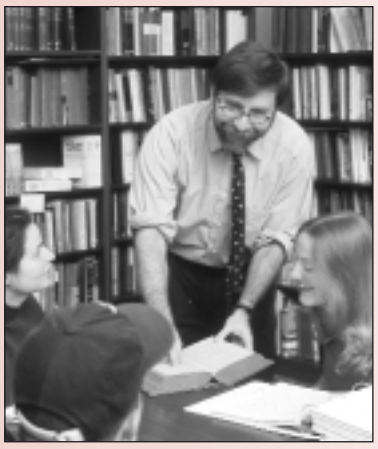
Religious studies scholars have experience in dealing with religion in its multiplicity, with multiple traditions, and multiple dimensions of traditions over time. We take seriously both the correspondence and distinctiveness of religious traditions around the world. In our efforts to understand the intersections of culture and religion, past and present, we constantly reorient the field. We reinvigorate religious studies. We create new narratives about religion, and we raise new questions about narrative itself. In researching what we may call the religious imagination, we extend our own imaginativeness in remaking scholarship. It is this dynamism that informs our teaching and scholarship from which secondary teachers could benefit most. As new printed, audio, and visual resources develop, teachers will know how to find them. Teachers will know how to translate what they learn from those resources into age and grade-appropriate instruction. What they need most from religious studies professors is access to our experience in teaching about religion.

In order to map out the territory of religious studies for teachers, to point out the main roads and interesting side paths, the cliffs and canyons, the badlands and oases, we need to be in some regular contact with them. Others in this edition of *Spotlight* have addressed the issue of public service and public spiritedness. The fact remains that the coming together of religious studies scholars and secondary teachers will yield benefits for both, and for our entire educational system, especially as it comes to terms with multiculturalism. Programs like the 3Rs Project (Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect) have begun to bring the two groups together. But there is still room for individual initiative. As a religious studies scholar, you can reach out to teachers in your district to advance the academic study of religion in the schools, and thus to advance the field.

[i] *Diversity Digest,* 5:2, 2001.

# University Religion Departments and Teaching about the Bible in Public High Schools: A Report from Florida

*David Levenson, Religion Department, Florida State University*



*David Levenson is a University Distinguished Teaching Professor at Florida State University, where he has been a member of the Religion Department since 1976. He teaches ancient Judaism, Christianity, and other Greek and Roman Religions, as well as Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic languages. His primary research interest is Jewish-Christian relations in Antiquity. In addition to his recent involvement in teaching about the Bible in public schools, he is an active participant in an on-going national project on the teaching of Biblical Hebrew, sponsored by the Wabash Institute for Teaching and Learning. Of particular relevance to some of the issues addressed here, is his article, "Different Texts or Different Quests? The Contexts of Biblical Studies," in* Hebrew Bible or Old Testament: Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Roger Brooks and J.J. Collins (Notre Dame Press, 1990), 153-164.*

## Background

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY (FSU) Religion Department became involved in the issue of teaching about the Bible in public schools in the Winter of 2000, when the Florida Department of Education asked us to review the guidelines for two courses that were part of the state curriculum: *Bible History: Old Testament* and *Bible History: New Testament*. There have been approved Bible courses in the Florida public schools for many years, but their constitutionality had been recently challenged by two events: a bitterly divisive battle in Lee County over the appropriate Bible curriculum to be adopted, and a report from the People for the American Way, *The Good Book Taught Wrong: 'Bible History' Classes in Florida's Public Schools*. This report claimed there were significant constitutional problems with the Bible courses in all the school districts in which they were being taught.

## The Lee County Bible Curriculum

In March, 1996, the Lee County School Board (Ft. Myers) authorized the teaching of a two-semester Bible history sequence, *Bible History: Old Testament, and Bible History: New Testament*. Both courses were listed in the state curriculum as social studies elective courses. Since the state provided only brief general guidelines and specific curriculum decisions were left to local school boards, a 15 member "Bible Curriculum Committee" was formed to develop a curriculum to be submitted to a vote of the five member School Board.

After a year and a half of contentious committee meetings focusing on both legal and content issues, the school board voted 3-2 in August, 1997, to adopt a Bible History I (Old Testament) curriculum. A Bible History II (New Testament) curriculum was adopted by the same margin in October. The first course was scheduled to begin in January, 1998, and the second in March. Opponents of the two courses, among whom were the ACLU and the People for the American Way, then sued the school board in Federal District Court, seeking a preliminary injunction to keep the courses from being taught. Among those supporting the school board were the conservative American Center for Law and Justice, and the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools.

The judged ruled in January that the Old Testament course could be offered, but should be monitored closely (even taped) by the plaintiffs to insure that it be "taught in a permissibly objective manner" and not as a "veiled attempt to promote Christianity in the guise of teaching history."[1] She granted the injunction against the teaching of the New Testament course, which, against the advice of the school board's attorney, was based entirely on the curriculum of the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools. The board agreed to settle the case by adopting a curriculum for both courses based on an introductory college-level textbook.[2] The school district required those planning to teach the course to take an intensive course given by Mitchell Reddish, of Stetson University — one of the authors of the textbook.

## People for the American Way: "The Good Book Taught Wrong"

The request to review the guidelines for the Bible History courses came to our department chair, John Kelsay, from the Florida Department of Education in January, 2000, shortly after the People for the American Way released a 60 page report severely critical of the way Bible History courses were being taught throughout the state.

The report, entitled *The Good Book Taught Wrong: 'Bible History' Classes in Florida Public Schools*,[3] was based on instructional materials obtained under the Florida Public Records Act from 14 of the 15 school districts that had taught one or both of the Bible History courses during the academic years 1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-1999. The request included, "lesson plans, exams, reading lists and assignments, as well as identification of all books, videos and similar instructional materials, and everything else given to or shown to students"[4]

The report argued that, "the courses are framed and taught from Christian perspectives"; "the Bible is used as a history textbook"; "students are assumed to be Christian and the Bible is taught accordingly"; "the Bible is used to promote Christian faith formation and religious values and lessons"; and "Sunday school and other religious training exercises are used to indoctrinate students in Bible content"[5]

Highlighted in the report and in the press coverage of its release were such exam questions as, "If you had a Jewish friend who wanted to know if Jesus might be the expectant [sic] Messiah, which book [of the Gospels] would you give him?" and, "Why is it hard for a non-Christian to understand things about God?"[6] Perhaps the item that received the most public attention was a question and answer from a lesson plan on John 8: "Who, according to Jesus, is the father of the Jews? The devil."[7]

While recognizing the appropriateness of teaching about the Bible from a non-sectarian perspective, especially as a work of literature and in the context of comparative religion classes, the report recommended the removal of both Bible History courses from the state-approved course list.[8]

## Developing New Guidelines

Citing state statutes that permit school districts to offer courses dealing with the "objective study of the Bible and religion,"[9] the General Counsel for the Department of Education asked the FSU Religion Department to review and make suggestions regarding "the title, subject area and substantive content" of the 1992 state course descriptions that serve as the guidelines for the courses developed by individual school districts.

The task was assigned to my colleague Shannon Burkes and me, the two members of the department who have the primary responsibility for teaching our introductory Bible courses. Robert Spivey, a former Religion Department chair, Dean of Arts and Sciences, and Executive Director of the American Academy of Religion, who had recently returned to the FSU administration, joined us. He brought his expertise as the co-author of a widely used New Testament textbook, and as a former director of a national project for teaching about religion in the public schools, which was developed at FSU in the early '70s.

At our first of several meetings with representatives from the Department of Education, there was general agreement that the 1992 curriculum frameworks needed revision. The guidelines for the two courses were brief and general, consisting of a single-sentence course description and short lists of contents and "intended outcomes." The primary emphasis on "understanding the Bible as a historical document" demanded more training than the teachers were likely to have. To the extent that this was interpreted as evaluating the historicity of the biblical accounts ("archaeological evidence and Biblical studies" is listed among the short list of topics for both courses), it introduced one of the most complex and debated aspects of contemporary biblical scholarship: one which could easily lead to attempts to prove or disprove particular religious claims.

We quickly agreed that emphasizing literary rather than historical issues made the most sense for high school teachers and students. Such a suggestion was also made in the report of the People for the American Way, and in *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*, a pamphlet published by the National Bible Association and the First Amendment Center and endorsed by a wide range of organizations from a variety of perspectives(including Council on Islamic Education, Anti-Defamation League, National Association of Evangelicals, the Christian Legal Society, the People for the American Way Foundation).[10] What neither of these documents points out, however, is that a focus on literary analysis also has the advantage of reflecting the most recent developments in contemporary biblical scholarship.

While recommending a focus on literary analysis, we did not believe that biblical literature could or should be taught in isolation from history. Questions of date and authorship of the documents, the appearance of historical events described in so many biblical narratives and assumed in so much biblical poetry, and the history of the interpretation of the text, beginning with the history of the text, canon, and translations, are all topics that cannot be avoided by even mildly curious and casual readers.

The guidelines we developed, therefore, while clearly emphasizing literary questions, also include historical issues surrounding the understanding of the literature. They quite definitely and intentionally do not include evaluation of the historicity of specific events, however.[11]

In order to signal the move from a more historical to a more literary approach, we recommended that the subject area be moved from social studies to humanities. While language arts would also have been a possible area for the Bible courses, we thought that placing them in the humanities area would suggest the interdisciplinary nature of such a course, which would bring in material and approaches from history and the fine arts as well as literature

The name of the courses was controversial, as "Old Testament" and "New Testament" were clearly Christian categories. "Hebrew Bible," or "Hebrew Scripture" was not precise either, since that would not include the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books. Our suggestion that courses be designated *Bible I: Literature of Ancient Israel, and Bible II: Literature of Early Christianity*, was evidently seen as too clumsy or pedantic, so the Department of Education decided to use simply *Introduction to the Bible I*, and *Introduction to the Bible II*.

## Announcement of New Guidelines

Tom Gallagher, the then Commissioner of Education, announced the new guidelines at a press conference on March, 16, 2000. Pointing to a large chart listing the concerns and the specific response by the Department of

See **LEVENSON**, p.7

**GUIDELINES**, from p.2

They are consensus statements, providing schools with assurance that they represent a broad range of views coming to agreement. As a result, they have been widely disseminated by the organizations that participated in their creation. Many school districts across the country have adopted the language of the guides as they have created policies to address a range of issues related to religion in schools.

Simultaneous with these efforts to reach consensus, the Williamsburg Charter Foundation brought together a diverse group of citizens to affirm American commitment to the civic framework provided by the Religious Liberty Clauses of the First Amendment. In 1988, 200 national leaders, including representatives of America's major faiths, political leaders, and scholars, signed the *Williamsburg Charter*,[11] rededicating American citizens to the principles of religious freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. This charter articulates the fundamental principles undergirding religious freedom: religious liberty or freedom of conscience as an inalienable *right*; a commitment to take seriously the civic *responsibility* to protect that right for all citizens, including those with whom we disagree; and a commitment to debate our deep differences with civility and *respect*.

In more recent years, significant consensus has emerged on what the law says about religion in public schools. This led to the April, 1995 publication of the *Joint Statement of Current Law*.[12] A group of 12 religious and civil rights organizations — chaired by the American Jewish Congress, and including the Christian Legal Society and the American Civil Liberties Union — drafted the *Statement*, with 23 additional organizations endorsing it. *The Joint Statement of Current Law* became the foundation for the growing consensus on the law that has followed. This pamphlet covers issues such as religious expression rights of students in a public school, religious activities at official school events, student assignments and religion, and teaching values.

The shared vision of the role of religion and religious liberty in public schools is clearly articulated by *Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy: A Statement of Principles*, published in 1995.[13] Principle IV states:

> Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education.

This vision, endorsed by 24 religious and educational organizations — from the Christian Coalition and the National Association of Evangelicals, to People for the American Way and the Anti-Defamation League — indicates how far we have come in finding common ground on religion in the public schools.

## Spreading the Word

In spite of the consensus that has developed, many school districts are still afraid to address the issues, and most have not taken a pro-active stance. Many are still without effective policies, and in almost every case the curriculum still largely ignores religion.

In various school districts however, there are now some very successful efforts to translate the new consensus into real change. Taking the principles of *rights, responsibilities*, and *respect*, articulated in the *Williamsburg Charter*, the First Amendment Center's Religious Freedom Programs have partnered with state educational organizations and departments to create 3 Rs Projects across the country. The most fully developed programs exist in California, in partnership with the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, and in Utah, with the Utah State Office of Education. The 3 Rs Projects are designed to help schools and communities find common ground on educational philosophy, school reform, and the role of religion and values in public schools through workshops, institutes, and forums.[14] Other communities, such as Richardson, Texas, Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Bay Shore, New York, have also embraced these principles and put them into policies, training for teachers and administrators, and workshops on teaching about religion in the public schools.

These efforts were aided when, in 1995, President Clinton directed Secretary of Education Richard Riley to develop and distribute to every public school superintendent guidelines for religious expression in the public schools. The President's guidelines were based upon the earlier *Joint Statement of Current Law* and consultation with experts in the field. With very slight alteration, these guidelines were re-released to superintendents again in 1998.[15]

Responding to a request by the Secretary of Education for a version of the President's guidelines that would be suitable for parents, the First Amendment Center, in partnership with the National PTA, published *A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*.[16] It was also released in 1995, and distributed widely by both organizations.

In December of 1999, when President Clinton asked the Secretary of Education to send out another mailing, a new strategy was employed. This time, the mailing would be a comprehensive set of guidelines and would go to every principal in every public school in the nation. A complete packet of guidelines addressing many of the thorniest issues in public education is now in the hands of every public school principal in the nation.

The five publications included in the mailing were:

- ***Religious Expression in the Public Schools***
  Provides a statement of principles from the US Secretary of Education that addresses the extent to which religious expression and activity are permitted in US public schools.

- ***A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools***
  Provides general information based on the First Amendment concerning religious expression and practices in schools. This booklet uses a question and answer format to address topics such as how to find common ground, student religious expression, student prayer, teaching about religion, religious holidays, student religious clubs, and character education. It contains a list of free-speech resource organizations and information on how to obtain a more in-depth guide to religion in public schools.

- ***A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools***
  Provides general information for teachers and administrators on the subject of religion in public schools. This guide answers questions such as, Is it constitutional to teach about religion?; May I pray or otherwise practice my faith while at school?; and May students express religious views in public schools?.

- ***Public Schools and Religious Communities: A First Amendment Guide***
  Focuses on arrangements between public schools and religious institutions, given the special constitutional implications of those relationships. Addresses such issues as crisis counseling, mentoring programs, and use of school facilities.

- ***How Faith Communities Support Children's Learning in Public Schools***
  Provides examples of ways in which faith communities such as the Male Youth Enhancement Project at Shiloh Baptist Church (Washington D.C.), the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (Panellas County, Florida), and the National Jewish Coalition for Literacy have made a positive impact on children's learning. This booklet also summarizes the dos and don'ts for partnerships between faith-based communities and public schools that were first developed in *Religious Expression in Public Schools*.

Also added to the packet was a "Things to Do" checklist for partnerships involving public schools and faith-based communities. This checklist was added to the packet at the request of some civil liberties groups who believed there should be more guidance and caution as schools and religious communities worked out these partnerships.

This Department of Education mailing provides an historic opportunity to take the consensus on religious expression in schools to a new level. In spite of the guidelines and the many good examples in communities across the nation, some school districts still impose religion, and some ignore or are hostile to it. Everywhere, the curriculum still fails to take religion seriously.[17] The fact that every school now has these guidelines means that schools in every community can develop polices on religion and religious expression in their schools confidently, ensuring that students of all faiths or none are treated with fairness and respect. Textbooks and classrooms can and should begin to reflect the shared vision for the role of religion in the curriculum. Where we still have disagreements, they can be debated civilly in an environment dedicated to the common good. Schools and communities no longer have any excuse for thinking that religion should be ignored or imposed, since there now exists a widely agreed upon third model.

## Remaining Challenges

While the broad-based consensus achieved is real, and the distribution of these materials to schools across the nation is historic in its potential impact, there is much more to be done. Not every challenge faced by public schools is solved by the law or court decisions, and sometimes guidelines need to be supplemented with hands-on assistance.

On issues where we still have deep and abiding differences, such as creationism and evolution, and sexuality and sex education, developing processes for debating our differences with respect and finding some common ground is crucial. School districts struggling with these and other "hot button" issues should be encouraged to reach out to organizations like the ones listed at the back of the Department of Education's guidelines for assistance (see List of Organizations on this page).

See **GUIDELINES II**, p.10

### List of organizations that can answer questions on religious expression in public schools

**Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism**
Contact: Rabbi David Saperstein
Address: 2027 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 387-2800
Fax: (202) 667-9070
**Web site:** *http://www.rj.org/rac/*

**American Association of School Administrators**
**Contact:** Andrew Rotherham
**Address:** 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209
**Phone:** (703) 528-0700
**Fax:** (703) 528-2146
**Web site:** *http://www.aasa.org*

**American Jewish Congress**
**Contact:** Marc Stern
**Address:** 15 East 84th Street, New York, NY 10028
**Phone:** (212) 360-1545
**Fax:** (212) 861-7056

**National PTA**
**Contact:** Maribeth Oakes
**Address:** 1090 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20005
**Phone:** (202) 289-6790
**Fax:** (202) 289-6791
**Web site:** *http://www.pta.org*

**Christian Legal Society**
**Contact:** Steven McFarland
**Address:** 4208 Evergreen Lane, #222, Annandale, VA 22003
**Phone:** (703) 642-1070
**Fax:** (703) 642-1075
**Web site:** *http://www.clsnet.com*

**National Association of Evangelicals**
**Contact:** Forest Montgomery
**Address:** 1023 15th Street, NW #500, Washington, DC 20005
**Phone:** (202) 789-1011
**Fax:** (202) 842-0392
**Web site:** *http://www.nae.net*

**National School Boards Association**
**Contact:** Laurie Westley
**Address:** 1680 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
**Phone:** (703) 838-6703
**Fax:** (703) 548-5613
**Web site:** *http://www.nsba.org*

**Freedom Forum**
**Contact:** Charles Haynes
**Address:** 1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22209
**Phone:** (703) 528-0800
**Fax:** (703) 284-2879
**Web site:** *http://www.freedomforum.org*

*Interview*

# A Teacher's Perspective

*Martha Ball is in her 26th year as a public school teacher, currently teaching ninth grade at Butler Middle School in Salt Lake City, Utah. In 2000, the Daughters of the American Revolution chose her as the Outstanding US History Teacher. Ms Ball holds both a B.A. degree in History and an M.A. degree in Educational Studies from the University of Utah. She has studied religion and history at the National Humanities Center on an NEH Fellowship. In addition to studying in Poland as an exchange student and in Greece as an NEH Fellow, Ms Ball studied Hinduism and world religions in India as a Hayes-Fulbright Fellow. She also spent time at the Ackerman Institute at Purdue University, studying how to teach about citizenship.*

*Ms Ball is the Director of the Utah 3Rs (Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect) Project, which promotes a civic framework for protecting religious liberty, finding common ground, and teaching about religion in the public schools. Ms Ball has conducted very successful fund-raising for the Utah 3Rs Project. The following are excerpts from a telephone interview with Martha Ball, conducted by D. Keith Naylor in March, 2001.*

**Naylor:** How does the study of religion figure in your classroom?

**Ball:** I use the 3Rs model as a classroom management tool for teaching about religion. In approaching the study of deeply held beliefs and traditions, issues such as civility, equality, diversity, justice, and the common good, all come into play. I seek to develop responsible young people and to serve as a role model for them. On the second day of the term, we begin discussing fair treatment, lack of harassment, and we create together a Classroom Bill of Rights, which we all sign. This sets up our responsibilities to one another in the learning process. Before we get to religion we discuss issues such as core democratic values and living with difference.

I teach a US history unit on world religions in a class in which a large percentage of the students are associated with the Latter Day Saints Church. Starting with the Puritans and moving to the Mormons, we find that both had to leave their homes to achieve religious liberty. This becomes an ethics lesson and a civics lesson: we turn to questions of religious liberty and the Constitution. We broaden our study to the major world religions, their beliefs and practices, and we raise the issue of how those world religions experience religious liberty in the US. Students read excerpts from Supreme Court cases on religion in order to understand what is legally acceptable in studying religion. They take copies of these excerpts home and have their parents read and sign them. In this way parents and students acknowledge that we are teaching about religion, neither proselytizing, nor avoiding religion — which amounts to hostility.

**Naylor:** What reactions have you had from parents and students?

**Ball:** We haven't received any parent calls. We have had no name calling or ridiculing in the classroom. In setting up the classroom as a civil learning space on the 3Rs model, we have gained broad cooperation and support.

**Naylor:** What resources were available to you in teaching about religion?

**Ball:** We had no resources in the 1980's. There was a Time-Life series on religion in the library. I began doing research on my own. There was nothing about religion in our basic history texts. We did have an in-service training regarding the legalities of student prayer in schools. Then I discovered the University of Utah Middle East Center, which offers many lectures and presentations related to religion. Now we have the *Oxford Series on Religion in American Life*, the *Pluralism Project* CD-Rom with sounds of religious rituals, which really draw students in. There is also a Holt, Rinehart, and Winston video series. I use the religion curriculum materials of the First Amendment Center, such as *Finding Common Ground,* and *Religion in American History — What to Teach and How*. One of our current projects is charting the religious landscape of Utah, thereby creating another resource for students in our state.

**Naylor:** How did you get involved with the Utah 3Rs Project?

**Ball:** In 1992, I was looking for ways to connect with the State Office of Education. I went to an intensive workshop on teaching about religion in Salt Lake City, led by Charles Haynes of the First Amendment Center. By noon of the first day, I was hooked. I wanted to be involved in bringing this approach to the state. The George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation gave us $250,000 to bring 3Rs to all school districts in Utah. Money began to flow, some of it going to pay teachers to attend workshops, for instance. This is a very important way of treating teachers as professionals, and of treating them with respect. Teachers are provided with materials from the First Amendment Center. Ten teachers, expert in teaching about religion, now meet regularly to discuss how to improve their skills. I use videotaping of teachers to train them in teaching about religion. Last June, we held a major program for teachers in northern Utah.

**Naylor:** What hurdles have you faced in recruiting teachers to include the academic study of religion in their classrooms?

**Ball:** No hurdles. Teachers are always looking for good classes, and they're looking to re-certify.

**Naylor:** In what ways can college and university-based scholars of religion best contribute to teaching about religion in the public schools?

**Ball:** Well, we do not have religious studies classes at Utah state universities. To help the understanding of diversity, I think religious studies should be part of the general education requirements for undergraduates and elective at high schools. Teachers could benefit from in-service training conducted by religious studies scholars. Our Middle East Center is great in helping teachers. What we need most is for university and public school educators to work as a team.

**Naylor:** Would you discuss your approach to getting administrators on board the 3Rs Project?

**Ball:** Ray Briscoe, our first Director of the 3Rs project, started by getting

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# Weighty Matters and the Teenage Reader

*Jenna Weissman Joselit, Visiting Professor of American and Jewish Studies, Princeton University.*

*Jenna Weissman Joselit, the author of* Immigration and American Religion *(Oxford University Press, 2001), is a visiting professor of American and Jewish Studies at Princeton University. Her other publications include* A Perfect Fit: Clothes, Character, and the Promise of America *(Henry Holt, 2001), and* The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, *1880-1950 (Hill & Wang, 1995).*

I CONFESS: I'm no teenager, and haven't been one for quite some time. I don't know too many contemporary teenagers, either. To make matters worse, I've never even taught teenagers, unless you count the day and a half I once spent participating in a university program for gifted adolescents. When it comes to America's teens, I'm clearly out of my element and clueless, to boot. Even so, when Oxford University Press invited me to write a history book on immigration and American religion for "young adults," I had no reservations about signing on the dotted line.

I rationalized my decision to produce *Immigration and American Religion*, one of 17 volumes in Oxford's Religion in American Life series, by choosing to see the project as an extension of a role I have inhabited for many years: that of public historian. Having actively shuttled between the academy and the museum world where I've consulted on and curated dozens of interpretive historical exhibitions, I am mindful of the manifold challenges of presenting history to audiences unfamiliar with and often bored by the past. I relish those challenges. Surely, I reasoned, writing a book for "young adults" could not be all that different.

In most respects, it wasn't so very different. Like exhibitions, this enterprise, too, called for a special set of presentational skills and strategies: a strong sense of narrative, attentiveness to detail, and a willingness to take the most complex historiographic debates and theoretical arguments about equally complex phenomena like faith and ritual, and simplify them. More a matter of distillation than of dumbing down, writing history for teenage readers prompted me to take, say, the voluminous literature on the Puritans or the growing literature on the post-1965 immigrant experience and to turn it over and over again to find the nub of the story.

What's more, each story in this volume, much like objects in an exhibition, must stand on its own, without benefit of helping hands. It cannot rely on exhaustive footnoting to buttress its claims or on lengthy citations from leading historians of immigration or American religion to give voice to ideas. Everything must come from within; nothing can be mediated. The only voices that can legitimately make themselves heard are those of the immigrants themselves. Consequently, memoir, autobiography, diary entries, and firsthand eyewitness accounts loomed large in this account. If they happened to be those of teenagers, so much the better.

I made a point, in fact, of drawing on sources that both captured the voices of teenage immigrants and reflected their youthful perspective on religion. I related how, in 18th century Pennsylvania, male teenage Moravians, members of the Renewed Unity of Brethren, were forced to abide by a curfew and how, in late 19th century New York, young Italian immigrants delighted in religious street festivals like the *feste della Madonna di Monte Carmelo*, and in the new clothes they wore to greet the Madonna. I told of Jewish immigrant boys preparing for their bar mitzvah in America of the early 1900s; of a Puerto Rican immigrant, decades later, lyrically recalling the santos that kept him company in the dark of night; and of a 15 year old Latina in Phoenix, Arizona, getting ready for her quinceanera in the 1990's. Time and again, the voices and experiences of these young immigrants not only animated the text but framed its overarching narrative as well, helping to unify what might otherwise have been a parade of chapters, each devoted to a

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# The Program in Religion and Secondary Education at Harvard Divinity School

*Diane L. Moore, Director*

*Diane L. Moore is the Director of the Program in Religion and Secondary Education at Harvard Divinity School. She is also on the faculty at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, where she teaches in the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department. Her current research interests are in religion and public policy in education.*

THE PROGRAM in Religion and Secondary Education (PRSE) at Harvard Divinity School is designed for people who wish to pursue a secondary school teaching career in conjunction with their theological studies. The PRSE is offered within the context of either the Master of Theological Studies or the Master of Divinity degree program, in partnership with cooperating secondary schools. In addition to earning their master's degree, PRSE students earn middle or secondary school teacher licensure in English, history, or political science/political philosophy from the Massachusetts Department of Education. The certification obtained is valid in nearly forty states, and represents the closest equivalent available today to a national teaching certificate.

In addition to their education toward licensure, students in the PRSE are specifically prepared to teach the study of religion and to develop curriculum resources that incorporate religion and religious worldviews within their field(s) of expertise. Students may also study constitutional issues, including what is and is not legal to teach in public school settings. In this regard, the PRSE is a specialized training program. It provides the explicit opportunity for teachers to explore the ways in which the study of religion can contribute to and enhance policy and content discourses across the educational spectrum.

## Foundations

At the core of the PRSE is the notion of education as vocation: the conviction that one teaches because partnership in the shaping of young lives is work that matters. From this perspective, the qualities emphasized in the preparation for teaching available through PRSE are passion for a subject, a genuine concern for youth, competence, and personal commitment.

Through courses at the Divinity School and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, students study adolescent development and explore a wide variety of educational theories, methodologies, and pedagogies. They formulate their own understanding of education as vocation and the frameworks that best represent that articulation. They also have the opportunity to strengthen their subject area expertise in English, history or political science/political philosophy.

## Standards and Curriculum Development to Integrate the Study of Religion

Religion and religious worldviews are woven into the fabric of world civilizations in both their historic and contemporary manifestations. Though it is impossible to understand the human endeavor without considering its religious dimensions, misrepresentations of the First Amendment have led to the virtual absence of religion in public education. This tacit acceptance of religious illiteracy promotes an inaccurate, partial view of civilizations, and fuels the false assumption that religion is a private endeavor and therefore irrelevant to the public domain. Consequently, citizens of the United States are not only ignorant of the world's religious traditions (all of which are practiced here in the U.S. in growing numbers), but they are also left without adequate tools to understand the profound role that religion plays in contemporary cultures and conflicts.

Through the PRSE program, students study the religious liberty clauses of the First Amendment and develop curricula and programs that incorporate the study of religion and religious worldviews in secondary schools within First Amendment guidelines. The program also sponsors professional development opportunities for educators in the field who wish to enhance their knowledge in this arena.

## Religion, Education, and Public Policy

Debates regarding public education have been at the forefront of the national agenda for decades. Educational reform efforts have been advanced to address a wide range of concerns, including inadequate and disproportionate funding, poor literacy rates, violence, and the lack of uniform standards to measure the competency of both students and teachers. Though there are differing assumptions about what the nature, scope, and purpose of public education should entail, a prescribed understanding of secularism defines the parameters of discourse. Contrary to popular understanding, the uniform imposition of secularism can itself be defined as a violation of First Amendment rights. Conversely, there is ample Constitutional latitude for values and perspectives that emerge out of religious frames of reference to be engaged and incorporated in public policy decisions.

The Religion, Education, and Public Policy aspect of the program promotes opportunities for students to explore the public policy dimension of the relationship between religion, values, and public education through course offerings, public lectures, and field education opportunities.

## Program Requirements

Students in the PRSE integrate their training in theological studies with their training to become effective educators. The program is flexible enough to attend to particular interests, yet focused to ensure adequate preparation to meet the challenges of teaching in the contemporary high school. In addition to a course on adolescent development and two electives in education, students are required to take the following two courses offered at the Divinity School: *2915 Colloquium in Religion and Secondary Education*, and *4650 Supervised Teaching Practicum*. Candidates for secondary school certification must also take two teacher licensure exams administered through the Massachusetts Department of Education. One exam is in literacy, and one in their chosen subject area: English, history, or political science/political philosophy.

## Admission to the Program

Students apply to the PRSE after they have been accepted into the Master of Divinity or Master of Theological Studies degree program at the Divinity School. Criteria for selection include a strong undergraduate record culminating in a bachelor's degree in liberal arts, a passionate commitment to youth, and an understanding of education as vocation. For more information, contact Diane L. Moore, Director, Program in Religion and Secondary Education, Harvard Divinity School, 45 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. (617) 384-8047. *diane_moore@harvard.edu*.

# The Religion and Public Education Resource Center

*Bruce Grelle*

THE RELIGION and Public Education Resource Center (RPERC) at California State University, Chico, was established in 1995. It is the home of materials formerly housed at the National Council on Religion and Public Education (NCRPE) Distribution Center (Indiana University, Pennsylvania). The RPERC seeks to foster a greater understanding of First Amendment guidelines for dealing with the topic of religion and public education, and provides resources for teaching about religions in public schools in ways that are constitutionally permissible and academically sound.

The RPERC serves both as a depository of existing materials and as a catalyst for the development and distribution of new materials relating to pedagogical and legal issues arising in connection with the topic of religion in the public schools. For classroom teachers, the RPERC offers curriculum guides and sample lessons in several subject areas. For administrators, school board members, members of the legal profession and interested members of the public, the Center provides brochures, background statements, bibliographies of resources, and reprints of pertinent articles. The Center also lists resources available for purchase from other organizations and agencies.

**The Religion and Public Education Resource Center**

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different immigrant group. Focusing on the religious experience and sensibility of teenage immigrants across time, space, and country of origin had the added effect of highlighting the similarities rather than the differences among them.

I also made a point of paying close attention to lived religion, to the tension between religious ideals and everyday life thinking that might appeal to young readers too. Incorporating numerous instances of such tension into the text, I described New England women who, hiding behind their oversized church bonnets, dozed off during the sermon while their men folk gathered outside to talk about farming rather than God; pastors who despaired of their congregants, and congregants who, despairing of their pastors, preferred to play basketball on Sunday rather than attend church. I made sure to make room for human foibles, frailties, and idiosyncrasies. I felt that this material, the stuff of history, had a far greater chance of engaging adolescents than a dutiful recitation of dates, places, and grand theories.

Energized by my mandate to make the past come alive, to introduce teenagers to the joys of history, and to suggest something of the complexity and vibrancy of America's religious landscape, I never felt I was in danger of compromising my scholarly integrity or of making short shrift of my academic training. On the contrary. Whether the subject at hand was the development of the American Catholic Church, the experience of Chinese immigrants in 19th century California, or the emergence of an Islamic American community at the end of the 20th, writing *Immigration and American Religion* called on my interpretive skills at every turn. Unable to assume any knowledge whatsoever on the part of my audience, I had to explain everything (succinctly, no less) while also placing a premium on clarity and liveliness. Sustaining the interest of my readers as they made their way from the 17th century to contemporary times brought into play every one of my classroom skills.

In other words, writing this book was far from easy. It was hard to avoid the temptation to clog the narrative with interpretive asides, to pile on the detail, to lead with theory rather than incident and, above all, to footnote. Finding the right phrase (somewhere between the language of the academy and the language of the street), striking the right note (neither lofty nor overly familiar), and knowing when to step in and when to step out also took quite a lot of writing and rewriting.

Eventually, after many false starts and long hours spent staring at the screen, I found my bearings, much as the subjects of this book — the Bradfords and the Freys, the Kellys and the Cohens, the Hongs and the Itos, the Rodriguezes and the Kassams — ultimately found theirs, transforming the United States in the process.

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Education (e.g. "taught as history"/"teach as humanities"), he stated, "By law, school districts have the right to teach the objective study of the Bible. The Department has taken steps to ensure that right." The last of the four major concerns listed was "lack of teacher training," to which the response was the creation of a "Technical Assistance Summer Institute."

## Summer Institutes

Clearly, the greatest problem associated with teaching about the Bible in the public schools is the lack of teachers trained in the academic study of the Bible. The plan to provide summer institutes is at best a stop-gap measure, while specific standards are being established which must include at least some work in Bible at the College level. While we suggested that the first summer be spent planning a full-scale institute for the next summer, the Department of Education wanted some teacher training in both legal and content issues to be offered during the summer of 2000. The FSU Religion Department, Department of Educational Leadership, and Center for Professional Development, together with the Florida Department of Education offered a two-day "Technical Assistance Workshop" for 30 teachers and administrators in July.

### *July 13-14, 2000*

The first day of the institute was taken up with an overview of the teaching of Bible in Florida. A panel of administrators discussed issues connected with the implementation of Bible courses. A panel of legal experts was organized by Joseph Beckham, chair of the FSU Department of Educational Leadership and the co-author of *A Legal Guide for Florida Teachers*.[12] The panel on legal issues included a lengthy discussion of the Lee County case, presented by Keith Martin, the lawyer for the School Board, who during the law suit found himself in the uncomfortable position of defending the actions of the Board that had rejected his advice on a number of key issues.

Shannon Burkes and I led an informal discussion with the teachers on the evening of the first day, and spent the entire second day presenting as much material as we could. For the evening session, we planned to moderate a discussion in which the teachers would exchange information about what had and had not worked in the classroom. This would also give us an opportunity to learn about their own training, interests, and needs.

It quickly became apparent that a number of the teachers were hesitant to talk freely about their experiences in the classroom because they believed that they had been unfairly maligned by the report from the People for the American Way, and not supported by the state Department of Education. They felt that they had worked hard to develop a non-sectarian course, that the report gave them no credit for this, and unfairly used a few egregious examples to paint all of them as religious bigots.

One teacher — one of the very few about whom the report said anything positive — was particularly incensed. She felt she had spent an inordinate amount of time developing an academically responsible Bible elective course (including attending seminars and lecture tours sponsored by the Biblical Archaeology Society), and was rewarded with finding herself criticized in the report and harassed by reporters. She had a point. The report cites her attempt to distinguish two aspects of Bible History as "the history that happened during Bible times" and "the history of how we got the Bible," and then suggests that the first aspect "appears to contravene the school district's guideline that the Bible will not be 'referred to as a factual document.'" She is also criticized for a test question asking for identification of the man who, "actually led the Jewish people into the Promised Land." The objection was evidently on the grounds that this assumes the historical accuracy of the text. Similarly, course materials that contain such "Sunday school type tasks" as asking students to list the 27 books of the New Testament in correct order are cited.[13] This is part of a general criticism that runs throughout the report, that any "exercises that emphasize rote memorization rather than critical thinking or analysis skills" are indicative of a Sunday school approach and are therefore inappropriate.[14]

While the report sometimes does go too far in pressing its case, it should not be forgotten that the People for the American Way Foundation has played an invaluable role in carefully monitoring for inappropriate and unconstitutional materials and practices, and supplying the legal resources to prevent abuses. The interpretation of the data in the report should not, of course, be accepted uncritically. At the same time, without the report, it is not clear how long it would have taken before the state of Florida recognized the problems with the way Bible History classes were being taught.

As soon as the teachers and administrators realized that we were there to help them rather than gather evidence against them, they opened up considerably. Throughout the second day, they remained interested and excited by the discussion of the methods of contemporary Biblical studies and their application to specific texts.

### *June 12-15, 2001*

The second summer institute, for which Corrine Patton (University of St. Thomas), and I were the primary instructors, featured only a half day of discussion of legal issues, including a case study approach led by Joseph Beckham. Three full days and evenings were devoted to issues connected with the content of the courses. As in the first summer program, our goal was not simply to present material the teachers could take directly into the classroom, but to provide background that would give them a deeper understanding of the methods and results of historical/literary criticism of the Bible. While the first institute drew administrators and teachers, the second had almost entirely teachers. Five teachers and one administrator who attended the first session participated in the second as well.

With more time we were able to expand our treatment of canon, text, and translation by including exercises comparing the endings of Mark, and different translations of several Psalms. Our surveys of Ancient Near Eastern, Jewish, and Graeco-Roman literature could also devote more time to looking at primary texts.

As was the case with the first summer's program, we decided to focus on a limited number of Biblical texts in order to illustrate the variety of methods that can be used in approaching the material. In summer 2000, Shannon Burkes had discussed literary approaches to the David narratives. In summer 2001, Corrine Patton used the Abraham cycle to illustrate narrative approaches and social history. One of the liveliest sessions — which we did not predict - was the group exercise she led focusing on identifying prophetic forms in Amos. Not only did the teachers seem to enjoy learning about the importance of taking into account literary forms and genres in understanding biblical poetry, they also thought the exercise would work well in their own classrooms. The last section was devoted to the Hebrew Bible focused on Genesis 1-3, and provided an opportunity to look at a number of traditional religious and modern academic approaches to a text.

While I spent part of the last day suggesting some ways of approaching Paul, almost all of the discussion of New Testament texts was devoted to the Synoptic Gospels. We spent half a day on a literary analysis of the Gospel of Mark, with some discussion of how an understanding of the first-century context, especially persecution and apocalypticism, could contribute to a fuller appreciation of the literary structure and religious themes of the text. During the last session, I worked through the Synoptic Problem with them, stressing both the importance of careful observation and collection of data, and the fact that the same data have been used since antiquity to support a number of different hypotheses. I also emphasized that, for the students, the main purpose of careful comparison of passages from the Synoptic Gospels is not to gain an understanding of the Synoptic problem, but to highlight the distinctive literary techniques and religious themes of each gospel.

When the Department of Education first raised the topic of the summer institutes, I had significant doubts. I was concerned that they would prove to be a superficial substitute for the sort of minimal training that should be required of anyone teaching Bible in the public schools. Reflecting on the past two summer institutes, however, I have a much more positive view of what they can accomplish. Nothing, of course, can substitute for a series of semester-long advanced undergraduate and graduate courses. A few of the teachers did have that sort of training. While most did not, they still were able to learn in a few intense days, much more about the methods and substantive issues than I would have thought possible. A number of factors could explain this. We were working with a self-selected group who had made the decision to attend the institute because they recognized what they could gain from interaction with biblical scholars. They were highly motivated to learn as much as possible, both to satisfy their intellectual curiosity and to acquire the analytical skills and information to bring to the classroom.

While I am confident that most of the teachers who attended the institute wanted to teach the Bible courses because of their importance to them personally, all of them appeared genuinely concerned to teach in a non-sectarian, academically respectable, and fully constitutional way. In the discussions of legal issues, they wanted as many specific guidelines as possible, and consistently wanted to err in the direction of caution. As a whole, the two groups were very impressive. The institutes have been among the most satisfying teaching experiences I have had in my 26 years teaching New Testament at FSU.

I have no way of knowing how typical the participants in the institutes were of those teaching the Bible courses. The report from the People for the American Way provides substantial evidence that there were many less sensitive and less competent teachers. Perhaps if the institutes continue and are required by the state, at least for those who have not done college-level work in the area, I will get a more representative sample and be in a better position to evaluate whether this experiment can work.

Clearly, the Bible will continue to be taught in public schools and must continue to be monitored carefully by organizations such as the People for the American Way. *The Good Book Taught Wrong*, with all of its faults, should be read by everyone dealing with the topic. *The Bible and the Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide* provides a wonderfully clear starting point for any discussion of why and how a Bible course should be taught in the public schools.

What has been missing in the current discussion, however, is the participation of biblical scholars. Though not always familiar with the special problems associated with high school introduction to Bible courses, we have for many years been thinking about how to introduce non-sectarian analysis of the Bible to students from a variety of backgrounds in public educational institutions. For those actually engaged in teaching about the Bible in public institutions, programmatic statements and legal advice about how the Bible should or should not be taught are of limited value. The immediate questions are not how to teach about the Bible in general, but how to present specific topics in an interesting and appropriate way. It is here that biblical scholars are uniquely qualified, both by their academic training and by their teaching experience, to contribute to the discussion.

The following concluding reflections on several key questions addressed in both *The Bible in Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide* and *The Good Book Taught Wrong* are meant to serve as examples of how the perspective of those who spend their careers teaching Bible in colleges and universities might be helpful to those thinking about the best way to teach the Bible in public schools.

## Which Bible?

Among the most prominent problems identified in the content of public school Bible courses are questions of canon, translations, and use of the term, "Old Testament." Properly handled, however, these can be among the least controversial topics in the course. Unlike questions of date, authorship, historical reconstruction, theological emphases, and literary analysis, they can be addressed using a straightforward descriptive approach that can be easily accessible to high school students.

A survey of the most important documents in the history of canon formation, and a description and comparison of the canons of contemporary communities, should be presented in the first unit of any Bible class. In addition, selections of literature not considered canonical by Jews and Protestants should be read either in connection with the discussion of canon or, perhaps better, discussed along with works of similar genre later in the course.

Although it might, at first glance, seem to involve overly complicated and religiously controversial questions, many aspects of textual criticism can be easily and appropriately treated in high school. Looking at pictures of ancient and medieval manuscripts, comparing major textual variants such as the endings of Mark, and learning about the Dead Sea Scrolls can be

See **LEVENSON II**, p.10

# God, gods, and Godot: Thoughts on Teaching about Religion in Secondary Education

*Matthew Hicks*

*Matthew Hicks earned a master's degree in theological studies from Emory University and a master's degree in religious studies with a minor in education from the University of Georgia. He has taught in both high school and college settings. He recently developed a curriculum on the Hebrew Scriptures for public secondary schools (available spring 2002), and is now writing a volume on Christian New Testament (available summer 2002).*

AN ADOLESCENT'S understanding of faith is deceptively simple. Ask most any 15 year old to define his or her faith system, and you will likely hear a long-held, tacitly accepted, stock answer. Teenagers filter their encountered world through this simplistically understood system. Daily interactions with new people, ideas, cultures, and other faith traditions stretch their fragile conceptual web. Furthermore, in today's schools students hang suspended between an Enlightenment commitment to rational certainty and a Postmodern *Weltanschauung* that warns against meta-narratives: Seek the truth, but know that there are no "Truths." Vulnerability, whether outwardly expressed or not, reaches new heights during adolescence.

Cast the subject of religion into a teenager's curricular mix and a plethora of additional issues surface. Parents, religious leaders, politicians, and educators acknowledge the necessity of teaching about religion if students are to receive a "complete" education.[1] Yet, everyone concerned clings white-knuckled to a set of ideological convictions — religious or otherwise — when the subject of religion in public education is broached.

How best are educators to teach religious studies to secondary students while remaining sensitive to their compulsory exposure, and to parents' and faith leaders' legitimate worries? A couple of methodological suggestions and thoughts might provide some insights unique to this subject and, hopefully, prevent educators from inadvertently fanning the flames of a costly American culture war.

One recurring and difficult issue facing secondary educators is how best to handle the unquestioning acceptance of beliefs by fundamentalist students. Interestingly enough, one solution lies in acknowledging that all adolescents are, in some sense, "fundamentalists": those willing "to do battle royal for the fundamentals."[2] Most, if not all high school students uncritically orient themselves and their lives around a received set of doctrines to which they feel an allegiance.[3] These inherited teachings prompt students to operate within a religion-based or a secular/science-based paradigm. Regardless of the particular model, all students maintain a firm hold on a "faith" (i.e. allegiance) system.

Peer pressures, identity crises, cultural tensions, and real and perceived needs form a difficult course for teens to navigate. One compass they use is their faith system. Secondary students desire to be grounded in a system that provides a familiar safety net as they maneuver through the school day. According to J.W. Fowler, "the adolescent's religious hunger is for a God who knows, accepts and confirms the self deeply, and who serves as an infinite guarantor of the self with its forming myth of personal identity and faith."[4] The combined complexity of these factors adds special significance to courses in religious studies.

In religious studies courses, students inevitably reflect on their own faith systems *vis á vis* the encounter of other traditions. The study of religion provides a unique forum in which students can respectfully express their thoughts and hopes while developing an appreciation for other worldviews. This does not mean, however, that these basic beliefs should be scrutinized in secondary schools. Simply put, there is enough to be gained by exposure to alien traditions without asking adolescents to evaluate critically the arguments of their own faith traditions.

Not everyone agrees with this position. For example, Nel Noddings, after providing some beneficial ideas for teaching about existential issues, writes:

> You [fundamentalists, and here she means Christian fundamentalists] are free to practice your religion as you see fit, but when you enter the public arena, your commitments and recommendations must be and will be subjected to the methods of intelligence. The public school is committed to these methods, and your children will necessarily encounter them.[5]

While Noddings tempers this edict at other places in her work,[6] taking such an approach will only alienate a large segment of American parents. It is, in my opinion, an insensitive and unacceptable view of how to teach fundamentalists — Christian or otherwise. Noddings might consider that, whether students worship God, gods, or are Waiting for Godot, every student is, essentially, a "fundamentalist!"[7]

The premise that all adolescents have an "unshaking need for an unshakable God"[8] (however they might define "God"), delimits the curriculum and pedagogical means of religious studies instruction. A useful methodology for engaging the topic of religion is to stratify lessons into three different, but related layers: historical, philosophical, and hermeneutical.[9] In the first layer, students explore questions of historical context. For example, if teaching about the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, teachers might discuss that the Cyrus Edict was issued ca. 539 BCE., that power shifted from the Babylonians to the Persians, that the returning Israelites eventually built a new temple, and that they forged a tight-knit community out of fear of religious assimilation. Teachers must exercise caution when excavating this layer, differentiating between historical context (who, what, when, and where), and historicity (whether something really did happen). The majority of instructional time and effort is devoted to familiarizing students with this type of background knowledge. Note, of course, that teachers must not overemphasize rote learning of facts, or intellectualizing the subject matter. Engaging the emotional side of religion and of religious adherents is an enormously important facet of teaching this subject.[10]

In the second layer, questions of meaning are discussed. For example, what do Zen Buddhists believe about meditation, or why do Sufis practice *dhikr*, the act of remembering *Allah*? Or, continuing with our example from Ezra and Nehemiah, why do some Jews and Christians believe that they must live apart from peoples of other faiths? Philosophical questions are concerned with current existential meaning. Teachers should address these discussions through attribution, avoiding the use of first person language: Mormons believe X and Hindus believe Y, etc. This segment generates the most controversy among parents and students.

The third portion, the hermeneutical layer, addresses issues of modern-day relevancy. How are the ideas, topics, and readings applicable to broad societal issues and the students' total learning experiences? Teachers can achieve effective curriculum integration in this portion of a lesson. Again using the example from Ezra and Nehemiah, US immigration laws, or the historical effects and possible remedies of segregation and xenophobia in the US could be explored.[11] The possibilities for linking religious studies with other courses are innumerable. With so many instructional tie-ins available, the fact that most school districts place religious studies in the "null" curriculum is an educational tragedy.

The historical development of American schools has, unfortunately, yielded very few useful instructional materials in the academic study of religion. In short, public schools moved from propagating Protestantism (1840's - 1960's) to becoming altogether silent on the topic of religion (1960's - present).[12] The result is that teachers can select only from an ample supply of Sunday School lessons or a library of textbooks that superficially mention religion. There have been few attempts at creating age-appropriate religious studies materials for public secondary schools.[13]

Admittedly, writing religious studies curricula for secondary schools is enormously challenging.[14] Creating appropriate materials for adolescents does not mean simplifying the vocabulary of a college textbook. The concepts, ideas, topics, and methods of instruction all have to be reshaped into a format suitable for teenagers. Also, unlike college students, all that does not flash and glitter is soporific in the world of teens. Due to the absence of materials, many teachers, myself included, spend

See **HICKS**, p.12

# Religion and Education

*Michael D. Waggoner*

Photo: Matt Kollasch

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*RELIGION AND EDUCATION* is a journal of analysis and comment with the purpose of advancing public understanding and dialogue on issues at the intersection of religion and education. More than two hundred years of practice and constitutional interpretation shape the current relationship of education and religion in the United States. Through dialogue and confrontation, from the earliest colonial days of Christian consensus through challenging modern and postmodern voices, scholars and lay people alike continue to explore, differentiate, and clarify the respective influences of these social forces on one another.

These issues emerge in various venues and manuscripts are invited from work in any such arena: public and private education; early childhood, elementary, secondary, or higher education institutions; non-school or community organizations and settings; and formal or informal organizations or groups with religion or spirituality as an integral part of their work. Over its history, the journal has paid particular attention to legal issues and court cases involving religion and education. In recent years, attention has also been paid to the increasing presence of religious and spiritual traditions from other than Western cultures. Since the early 1980's, the journal has covered topics including school prayer; intelligent design and evolution; vouchers; character education; challenges and opportunities of multicultural curriculum; and approaches to teaching religion in schools. Future editorial directions will continue to follow developments in these areas while broadening attention to include emergent religious pluralism, widespread interest in spirituality, social justice, and the environment. Greater attention will be given to developments in higher education, the work of international scholars, and important developments in areas and organizations outside formal public and private education. These could include community-based work as well as foundations, not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations, and business. All of these organizations have significant educational missions and impact many people in their workplace.

We invite articles from diverse methodological approaches, and theoretical and ideological perspectives. Readers from a variety of faith traditions and worldviews can expect to find a rich diversity of ideas represented. It is the intent of the editors to present material that, though challenging and provocative, is undertaken with scholarly care. Some articles are invited, but unsolicited articles are also encouraged. The journal's Web site (*www.uni.edu/jrae*) contains more information, including related links, submission guidelines, editorial board, and subscription information.

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# Moses Who? Literacy, Citizenship, and the Academic Study of Religion in the Schools

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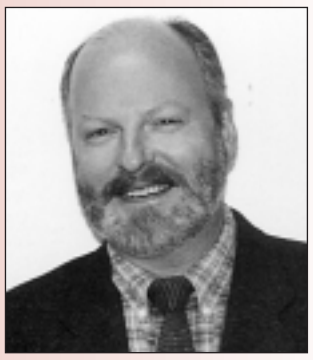

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A FEW YEARS AGO, one of my students stayed behind to speak with me after class. We had just spent several sessions reviewing some of the main outlines of classic stories from the Hebrew Bible. These included stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Israelites, stories of Moses, the Exodus, and the Ten Commandments, and stories of King David, the prophets, and the Babylonian exile, among others. My student said that she wanted to thank me for all that she had learned during our recent class meetings. She explained that she had not been raised in a religious family and that all of these stories were brand new to her. I expressed appreciation for her comments and assured her that even students who had been raised in Jewish or Christian families often needed a "refresher" when it came to the details of many of these Bible stories. I also pointed out that elements of these stories had become part of the general cultural legacy of people in our civilization, and that most people had at least some familiarity, however vague, with many of the main characters and events in these narratives. "So, for example, even though you don't come from a religious background, you've at least heard of people like Moses," I said to her. "No, I never heard of Moses before this class," she replied.

Assuming that she must be exaggerating, we chatted for a while longer. Further conversation persuaded me that she was not pulling my leg. Not only had she been unaware of the biblical narratives, she was not familiar with photographs of Michelangelo's famous sculpture, could not recall having ever sung or heard the African-American spiritual, "Go Down Moses," nor having ever watched television re-runs of *The Ten Commandments*, with Charlton Heston in the role of Moses. (Neither one of us had seen Disney's 1998 rendition of the story, *Prince of Egypt*).

This young woman had been born and raised in the United States. She was not a poor student. She came to class regularly, completed her reading assignments, turned in her written work, and passed exams. Nonetheless, she had completed twelve years of schooling and three years of college before she had "heard" of Moses.

What is even more disheartening about this story is that this young woman was preparing to become a high school teacher. The course in which she was enrolled as my student is entitled, *Teaching About Religions in American Public Schools*. This course is populated by social science majors who plan to apply to a single-subject teaching credential program on their way to becoming junior or senior high school teachers, and by liberal studies majors who plan to apply to a multiple-subject credential program and become elementary school teachers. While my student was more candid than many Americans about the degree of her cultural and historical illiteracy, she is by no means alone among her peers when it comes to gaps in knowledge about the world's religions.

Recently, I administered an informal multiple-choice questionnaire to students at the beginning of the semester in order to assess their familiarity with some basic facts about the world's religions. Among students enrolled in one section of my *Teaching About Religions* course, 37% thought that Confucianism had originated more recently than Islam, and 40.7% defined "Nirvana" as the "continuing cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth in many differing forms and conditions of existence." Fully 37% thought that Muslims believe Muhammad to be the messiah, while 29.6% thought that Muslims believe Muhammad to be the incarnation of Allah (25.9% correctly identified the Muslim view of Muhammad as the last and greatest of God's prophets). In another section of the same course, 38.7% of the students thought that Christianity had originated earlier than Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, 35.4% identified the Qur'an as a religious scripture most closely associated with Hinduism, and 29% thought that the stories and ceremonies associated with the Jewish holiday of Passover are based on the war of rebellion led by Judas Maccabeus (compared to the 19.3% who correctly identified Passover with the story of liberation from slavery in Egypt. One can only imagine how these students might have responded to the question, "Who was Judas Maccabeus?"). Not only does this raise questions about the degree of cultural and historical illiteracy among university students in general and among future teachers in particular, it also raises questions about how well these individuals will be able to function as citizens in a religiously diverse society.

## Religious Literacy and Democratic Citizenship

The relationship between democratic citizenship and knowledge about the world's religions was the topic of a guest commentary by high-school student, Chana Schoenberger, published in Newsweek a few years ago and reprinted in *Finding Common Ground*.[1] In her essay, "Getting to Know About You and Me," Chana describes her experience as one of twenty teens who spent five weeks during the summer studying acid rain at the University of Wisconsin at Superior as part of a National Science Foundation Young Scholars program. Represented among the students were eight religious traditions: Jewish, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, Methodist, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, and Lutheran. Chana was amazed at the degree of ignorance regarding other people's religions among this otherwise outstanding group of students:

> On the first day, one girl mentioned that she had nine brothers and sisters. "Oh, are you a Mormon?" asked another girl, who I knew was a Mormon herself. The first girl, shocked, replied, "No, I dress normal!" She thought Mormon was the same as Mennonite, and the only thing she knew about either religion was that Mennonites don't, in her opinion, "dress normal."
>
> My friends, ever curious about Judaism, asked me about everything from our basic theology to food preferences. "How come, if Jesus was a Jew, Jews aren't Christian?" my Catholic roommate asked me in all seriousness. Brought up in a small Wisconsin town, she had never met a Jew before, nor had she met people from most other "strange" religions (anything but Catholic and mainstream Protestant). Many of the other kids were the same way.
>
> "Do you still practice animal sacrifices?" a girl from a small town in Minnesota asked me once. I said no, laughed and pointed out that this was the twentieth century, but she had been absolutely serious. The only Jews she knew were the ones from the Bible.

According to Chana, "Nobody was deliberately rude or anti-Semitic, but I got the feeling that I was representing the entire Jewish people through my actions." She winced at the thought that many of her new friends would go home to their small towns believing that all Jews liked Dairy Queen Blizzards and grilled cheese sandwiches, since that was true of all the Jews they knew — in most cases, Chana herself and the one other Jewish student enrolled in the summer program.

> The most awful thing for me, however, was not the benign ignorance of my friends. Our biology professor had taken us on a field trip to the EPA field site where he worked, and he was telling us about the project he was working on. He said that they had to make sure the EPA got its money's worth from the study — he "wouldn't want them to get Jewed."

Chana recounts her astonishment that this professor who, "had a doctorate, various other degrees and seemed to be a very intelligent man ... apparently had no idea that he had just made an anti-Semitic remark." She and the other Jewish girl in the group wrestled with the question of whether they should say something to him about it. They agreed that they would confront him, but neither of them ever did. No doubt Chana speaks for countless students of all ages and grade levels from around the country when she writes, "For a high-school student to tell a professor who taught her class that he was a bigot seemed out of place to me, even if he was one."

As Chana Schoenberger goes on to explain, she had always been under the impression that in America we are expected "to respect each other's traditions." Yet, as she correctly observes, "Respect requires some knowledge about people's backgrounds." Clearly, without such knowledge it becomes all too easy to caricature and trivialize the religious beliefs and practices of fellow citizens who belong to religious, racial, or ethnic communities different from our own. How long can a civil society survive in such a climate of ignorance and misunderstanding?

## Religion in the Curriculum and Teacher Education

It comes as no surprise that, as a professor of religious studies, I am convinced that the academic study of religion makes an indispensable contribution to historical and cultural literacy. It is impossible to achieve an adequate understanding of history and culture (literature, art, music, philosophy, law, ethics, politics), without knowing something about the role that religious ideas, practices, and institutions have played and continue to play in human life. One does not have to subscribe to E.D. Hirsch's theories of cultural literacy, nor to those of any particular one of Hirsch's allies or critics, in order to think that it is important for future teachers — and citizens generally — to have "heard" of Moses, to know that Confucius lived before Jesus, or that Muslims do not believe that Muhammad was the incarnation of Allah.

Along with Chana Schoenberger, I am convinced that knowledge about the world's religions is an integral part of education for citizenship in a pluralistic society. While there may be good reason to be disheartened by evidence of widespread ignorance regarding the world's religions, there really is no good reason to be surprised.

Until quite recently, the academic study of the world's religions (as contrasted with formal and informal school sponsorship of the religious symbols, holidays, and agendas of the dominant religious groups in various localities) has been all but absent from the public school curriculum. Despite the fact that religious diversity is nowhere more apparent than in America's public school classrooms, the professional preparation of public school teachers and administrators typically includes no systematic attention to the ethical, legal, and pedagogical issues that arise in connection with the topic of religion in the schools.

While there are many reasons for this lack of attention to religion, among the most significant of these is the widespread misunderstanding of Supreme Court decisions regarding the First Amendment and public education. In the school prayer cases of the 1960's, the high court ruled that school-sponsored religious exercises, such as prayer and devotional Bible reading, are violations of the "establishment clause" of the First Amendment. Governmental agencies such as public schools are prohibited from involving themselves in the organization, promotion, or sponsorship of such religious activities. Many Americans — supporters and opponents of school prayer alike — believe that these court decisions effectively banished religion from the public schools altogether. But this belief is mistaken.

See **GRELLE**, p.11

**LEVENSON II**, from p.7

interesting class projects, for which there are abundant and inexpensive video and Web resources.

The question of which translation to use need not be as controversial as most of those writing on this subject seem to think. Comparison of a variety of translations is an obvious and essential class project, simplified considerably by Web resources. As long as students have discussed questions of canon and text, have understood the fact that the content and order of the books differ among various communities, and have compared the same selections from different translations, there need not be a great problem if one particular translation is used by most students. After all, it is differences in translation philosophy (e.g. "dynamic equivalence" versus "formal equivalence" translations), rather than in theology that account for all but a very few of the differences among modern translations.

*The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide* suggests that, "a biblical source book that includes key texts of each of the major Bibles or an anthology of various translations" might be better than adopting one particular Bible.[15] While such a book would be a valuable resource, the selection process, in effect, creates another canon. Perhaps more significantly, it also limits the possibility of the sort of wide ranging comparison among texts from different parts of the Bible that is essential for any literary or historiographic analysis.

It is easier to recognize the problem with the use of the term "Old Testament," than it is to come up with a convenient alternative. "Hebrew Bible," "Jewish Scriptures," and "Tanakh" are all problematic in that they exclude the Apocrypha, or Deuterocanonical books. The important point is to explain the issue and introduce the terms used by the different communities, rather than to insist that only one term be used.

## Whose Interpretation?

*The Bible in Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide* sensibly suggests that, "[b]ecause there are many ways to interpret the Bible — religious and secular — public school teachers should expose students to a variety of interpretations." Implementing the suggestion, however, can be problematic. As the document goes on to say, this is especially fraught if teachers, after allowing "students to encounter the text directly ... draw on the resources of different religious and secular interpretative traditions for understanding it."[16]

Most public school teachers and, in fact, many biblical scholars, are not adequately prepared to explain how various religious traditions might interpret a biblical text. Generalizing about "Jewish" or "Catholic" interpretations of particular passages, for example, could easily lead to a distorted impression and encourage students to attack or defend an interpretation based on religious commitments. I found particularly helpful the suggestion my colleague Corrine Patton made during last summer's institute. She proposed that instead of referring to Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, or Jewish interpretations, teachers should introduce the history of the biblical interpretation by using specific examples and attributing them to specific individuals or texts. A comparative religion class seems to be a much better place for an extensive discussion of how different traditions might interpret the Bible, since the interpretation can be placed within the context of particular communities' beliefs, practices and institutions.

## Literary and Historical Approaches

While historical background, history of interpretation and the role the Bible has played in Western culture should be discussed at some point, surely the main goal of a Bible course should be to read the text closely and carefully. For this, literary analysis offers the best approach. Discussions of plot, characterization, generic conventions, and so on, can provide a critical distance that allows students from a number of different religious or non-religious perspectives to read the text together. The introduction of some historical context, however, is particularly helpful in encouraging students to imagine how ancient Israelites or early Christians might have read the text. Such a contextual reading also offers the possibility of a critical distance that does not demand or privilege specific religious commitments. Asking what a particular New Testament text might have meant to first-century Christians is one way of providing equal interpretive access to Christian and non-Christian students alike.

While discussion of the historicity of particular events might easily be avoided by focusing on literary structures and the range of meanings the text might have had for particular communities, at some point questions of date, authorship, and sources are bound to arise. Here it is important to provide students with a range of opinions and some sense of the evidence on which they are based. Dogmatic assertions should be avoided, not only because they might offend the religious sensibilities of some students, but also because the evidence for most of these questions is hardly conclusive, and the tools for evaluating the evidence are not easily accessible to high school students or their teachers.

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[1] Gibson v. Lee County School Board, 1 F. Supp. 2d 1434 (M.D. Fla. 1998).

[2] Beasley, James R., Clyde E. Fant, E. Earl Joiner, Donald W. Musser, and Mitchell G. Reddish. *An Introduction to the Bible*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991).

[3] Schaeffer, Judith E., and Elliot M. Mincberg. *The Good Book Taught Wrong: 'Bible History' Classes in Florida's Public Schools*. (Washington: People for the American Way Foundation, January 2000). Also at *www.pfaw.org/issues/liberty/florida-bible.shtml*.

[4] Schaeffer and Mincberg, *The Good Book*, 4.

[5] Ibid., 4-11.

[6] Ibid., 8.

[7] Ibid., 9

[8] Ibid., 12-13.

[9] 233.0612, F.S. and 233.062, F.S.

[10] *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide* (Nashville: First Amendment Center, 1999). For online text and related information about the document, see *www.teachaboutthebible.org*.

[11] The complete course descriptions and guidelines are available at *www.firn.edu/doe/curriculum/crscode/basic612/912/hu912/0900400.pdf (Introduction to the Bible I)*, and *www.firn.edu/doe/curriculum/crscode/basic612/912/hu912/0900410.pdf (Introduction to the Bible II)*.

[12] This volume includes the chapter, "Religious Neutrality and Free Exercise of Religion."

[13] Schaeffer and Mincberg, *The Good Book*, 31-32.

[14] Ibid., 1; cf. 11-12. Another area where the report seems problematic is in its criticism of the use of books published by presses with some religious connection, including not just Paulist, Zondervan, Hendrickson, and Eerdmans, but HarperSanFrancisco, whose Web site states that it publishes, "Inspired books for mind, body and soul" (57).

[15] *The Bible and Public Schools*, 6.

[16] Ibid.

**BALL**, from p.5

approval from the State Office of Education to bring Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas (of the First Amendment Center) to meet with school superintendents. They spent a whole day raising awareness about the study of religion, the academic framework, and the civic framework. Then we brought in principals and assistant principals, other district officials, and teams from schools. After two months, we did a follow-up meeting with all involved. It is always important to involve administrators: they're the ones who get the phone calls!

**Naylor**: What are the most pressing opportunities and obstacles you face in teaching about religion in the public schools?

**Ball:** Time is the primary issue. For many teachers, finding time to incorporate one more new thing into the curriculum is a problem. The desire is strong, but it seems that there is too much to do. Perhaps the greatest challenge is getting teachers and administrators to overcome their fear of being sued if they teach about religion. Finding the money is key; finding money to reduce classroom size and raise teacher salaries, thus improving morale, is important. Social conditions can have a strange effect. For instance, the recent school shootings have actually resulted in more money for the schools.

**Naylor:** How has your work with religion in the schools affected your career as an educator?

**Ball:** It has kept me in education; I was ready to leave. I was sick of the disrespect. I had been offered money to administer a grant. Then I went to Charles Haynes' conference. He said teachers are our hope and our heroes. This work has restored my vision and my commitment to education. Teaching about religion helps me remember why I went into education. I feel that I am doing something important, for I am helping to develop strong citizens.

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**GUIDELINES II**, from p.4

If religion and religious conviction are to be treated fairly and with respect in our public schools, then teaching about religion must be taken more seriously.

> ...if public schools `may not inculcate nor inhibit' religion, if they are to remain neutral concerning religion, then the curriculum must include religious as well as secular ways of understanding the world.[18]

In order to teach about religion in an objective way, appropriate to a public school education, teachers must themselves learn something about religion. They must know something about the world's religions generally, and something about how religion impacts their own area of expertise. This is not currently a part of what teachers are expected to know when they complete their teacher training programs, but it must be included if students are to receive a complete education.

Similarly, in order to promote a civil environment in our schools where all the members of the public school are treated with respect, teachers must understand their role as representatives of our common compact as Americans. In a significant way, "we the people" are represented by public school employees. Their role carries with it a responsibility to be neutral in religious matters, and to protect the freedom of conscience of each student in the school.

These issues still present challenges to us that are only magnified by our increasing pluralism. We now have an unprecedented opportunity to rise to the challenge to apply fully and fairly the principles and ideals in our Constitution and Bill of Rights. Not to some Americans, but to all. Our public schools are the obvious place to begin.

* An earlier version of this essay appeared in Religion and Education,27:1, Fall, 2000.

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[1] See the following textbook studies: O.L. Davis, et. al. *Looking At History: A Review of Major US History Textbooks*. Washington D.C.: People for the American Way, 1986; Haynes, Charles C. *Teaching About Religious Freedom in American Secondary Schools*. Silver Spring, MD: Americans United Research Foundation, 1985; Vitz, Paul. *Censorship: Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks*. Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1986. See also *Religion in the Curriculum*, a report published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in 1987.

[2] See *Teaching About Religion in National and State Social Studies Standards*, by Susan Douglass. Conducted by the Council on Islamic Education and published by the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 2000. Executive summary available by calling the First Amendment Center at 615-321-9588.

[3] The press release for this address can be found at the Federal Department of Education's web site, *http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/12-1999/wh-1218.html*.

[4] Engle v. Vitale, 370 US 421 (1962) and Abington School District v. Schempp, 374 US 203 (1963).

[5] Westside Community Schools v. Mergens 496 US 226 (1990).

[6] The Equal Access Act (20 USC. 4071-74) allows for religious expression by students in secondary public schools. The Act lays out the conditions under which students may initiate and form religious clubs, namely, if other non-curriculum related clubs are allowed to meet, and it provides clear guidance to schools in maintaining neutrality with respect to those clubs.

[7] This coalition was co-chaired by Charles Haynes, then with Americans United Research Foundation, and Oliver Thomas of the Baptist Joint Committee.

[8] "Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers," *Finding Common Ground*, Haynes, Charles C. and Oliver Thomas, eds. (Nashville: The First Amendment Center, 1998), 6.1.

9 "Religious Holidays in the Public Schools," *Finding Common Ground*, Haynes, Charles C. and Oliver Thomas, eds. (Nashville: The First Amendment Center, 1998), 10.1.

[10] "Equal Access and the Public Schools: Questions and Answers," *Finding Common Ground*, Haynes, Charles C. and Oliver Thomas, eds. (Nashville: The First Amendment Center, 1998), 11.4.

[11] Hunter, James Davison and Os Guinness, eds. *The Williamsburg Charter*. Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1990.

[12] *Religion in the Public Schools: A Joint Statement of Current Law*, New York: American Jewish Congress, 1995.

[13] *Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy: A Statement of Principles*. Nashville: First Amendment Center, 1995.

[14] For more information on 3 Rs Projects, contact Charles Haynes, Senior Scholar, Religious Freedom Programs of the First Amendment Center, TEL: 703-528-0800.

[15] The most recent version is reprinted in *Finding Common Ground*, 13.1, and is available from the Federal Department of Education.

[16] *A Parent's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*, 1995, a joint publication of The National PTA and the First Amendment Center. It is available free of charge from the First Amendment Center.

17 Nord, Warren A. and Charles C. Haynes. *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.

18 Nord and Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously*, 23.

**GRELLE**, from p.9

*The Equal Access Act*, passed by Congress in 1984, and upheld by the Supreme Court in 1990, safeguards the religious liberty rights of public school students. In upholding the constitutionality of the Act, the Court noted that there is a "crucial difference between government speech endorsing religion, which the Establishment clause forbids, and private speech endorsing religion, which the Free Speech and Free Exercise clauses protect."[2] Under the terms of *The Equal Access Act*, secondary school students have the right to pray individually and in groups, to read the Bible and other types of religious literature, and to form religious clubs. These activities must be initiated and led by students, not by school officials, and they are subject to the same "time, place, and manner" restrictions that school officials apply to other student activities. So long as schools allow other non-curriculum-related student activities, however, they must not discriminate against student religious groups.

Moreover, the courts have acknowledged the important role played by religion in history, society, and culture, and they have made it quite clear that *learning and teaching about* religion in the public schools is perfectly consistent with constitutional principles. Indeed, as Justice Tom Clark wrote in Abington School District v. Schempp:

> "...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 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 and of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment..."[3]

Even so, as Marcia Beauchamp's article in this issue of *Spotlight on Teaching* makes clear, schools have been slow to integrate the topic of religion into the curriculum.

If public schools have shown little interest in religious studies, it is also true that scholars of religion (with such notable exceptions as Nicholas Piediscalzi and his associates), have shown little inclination to become involved in teacher education nor in efforts to introduce religion into the curricula of elementary and secondary schools.[4] Most scholars have not been socialized into a professional culture that values and encourages collaboration with teachers and teacher educators, and such work has not been recognized and rewarded by the tenure and promotion systems of most departments, colleges, and universities.

There are signs that things are changing, however, both in the schools and in the profession. In California, for example, the State Board of Education has adopted a history-social science curriculum that explicitly calls for more attention to be given to the study of religion and ethics. This document stresses the importance of religion in human history and states, "students must become familiar with the basic ideas of the major religions and the ethical traditions of each time and place."[5]

It continues:

> To understand why individuals and groups acted as they did, we must see what values and assumptions they held, what they honored, what they sought and what they feared. By studying a people's religion and philosophy as well as their folkways and traditions, we gain an understanding of their ethical and moral commitments. By reading the texts that people revere, we gain important insights into their thinking. The study of religious beliefs and other ideological commitments helps explain both cultural continuity and cultural conflict.[6]

The newly adopted *California History-Social Science Content* Standards further ensure that knowledge about religion and religious liberty will be part of what students are expected to know when they are tested. Because of their specificity, the standards will encourage teachers to delve more deeply into the social and historical roles of religious ideas, texts, values, and institutions.[7]

It is one thing to say that more attention should be given to the topic of religion in the public schools. It is another thing to prepare teachers and administrators to deal knowledgeably and responsibly with the range of historical, cultural, legal, and pedagogical questions that arise in connection with the topic of religion and public education. The responsible integration of the study of religion into the public school curriculum requires teachers to have substantive knowledge of the religious histories and traditions about which they are now expected to teach. In California, for example, the world history curriculum for seventh and tenth grades deals explicitly with the religions of India, China, and the Middle East. Other grade levels deal with the role of religion in American history and society. Some general knowledge of world religions is also a necessary background for understanding many of the "current events" that are discussed throughout the K-12 curriculum.

Teachers must also be prepared to deal with religion as it arises in the lives of many of the students in their classrooms. A basic knowledge of the world's religions will not only help teachers to teach more effectively about ancient civilizations or the history of the United States, but also help them to better understand and communicate with students and parents who may be Jehovah's Witnesses, Sikhs, Muslims, evangelical Christians, or traditional Hmong. The fact still is, however, that most teachers have never had even a basic introductory course on the world's religions as a part of their professional preparation. It is in this connection that religion scholars can play an important role.

## Religion Scholars as Public Intellectuals in Teacher Education and the Schools

Among the ways in which religion scholars can contribute to the responsible integration of the academic study of religion into the elementary and secondary schools are the following:

1. Familiarizing teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, and students themselves with the historical background and First Amendment principles that provide the framework for thinking about religion and public education. Important venues for this activity are provided by 3 Rs Projects (Rights, Responsibilities, Respect): a program for finding common ground on issues of religion and values in public schools. The 3Rs projects are sponsored by the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center in collaboration with local schools in several states including California, Utah, Oklahoma, Texas, Georgia, and Pennsylvania.[8]

2. Providing in-service teacher education regarding the world's religions. Working with local school districts, state subject matter projects, and grant-making agencies, religion scholars can offer workshops, seminars, and institutes on the study of religion as part of teachers' ongoing professional development activities.

3. Providing pre-service teacher education regarding issues of content and pedagogy that arise in connection with the academic study of religion. Religion scholars can work with faculty from departments and schools of education to integrate the academic study of religion into teacher education and credentialing programs.

4. Developing curriculum materials that are useful to teachers and accessible to elementary and secondary school students. Notable recent accomplishments in this area include the new *Religion in American Life* series published by Oxford University Press,[9] and *America's Religions: An Educator's Guide to Beliefs and Practices*.[10] In addition to introductory textbooks and audio-visual resources on the world's religions, there is a special need for self-contained lesson plans or "religion modules" that can be integrated into other larger units in the history, social studies, and language arts curricula.

Why have religion scholars not been more willing to play a role as "public intellectuals" in teacher education and in the schools? Russell Jacoby's well-known account of intellectual life in the "age of academe" provides part of the answer. According to Jacoby and other critics of over-specialization in contemporary intellectual life, academics have become accustomed to thinking, writing, and speaking about and for one another rather than for a broader audience of fellow citizens.

> Campuses are their homes; colleagues their audience; monographs and specialized journals their media ... Academics write for professional journals, that ... create insular societies... The professors share an idiom and a discipline. Gathering in annual conferences to compare notes, they constitute their own universe... As intellectuals became academics, they had no need to write in a public prose; they did not, and finally they could not.[11]

Of course, individual scholars are constrained by the institutions in which they work, and choices about what activities are deemed worthy of pursuit are not entirely up to them. A professor's job, salary, and opportunities for advancement depend on the evaluation of specialists, and this inevitably affects the issues discussed and the language employed.[12] As mentioned earlier, systems of tenure and promotion reward faculty who establish their own prestige through specialized publication directed toward and recognized by expert publics or elites, rather than through practical action in the community or influence on public opinion and social change.

There are indications, however, that the narrow and highly specialized definitions of scholarship brought about by the professionalization of academic intellectual life are changing. Ernest Boyer's influential book, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, for example, has encouraged a rethinking of the relationship between research, teaching, and service, by calling for an enlargement of our understandings of what counts as scholarship. Increasingly, institutions of higher education are coming to value not only the "scholarship of discovery," — which comes closest to what is meant when academics speak of "research" — but also what Boyer calls the scholarship of "integration," of "application," and of "teaching."[13]

Some recent developments indicate a growing recognition and acceptance among religion scholars of an enlarged conception of scholarship that includes activities related to teaching about religions in the schools. In addition to the publication for young readers of the Oxford series, *Religion in American Life*, these developments include increased attention to religion and schools issues on the part of the American Academy of Religion. In the past few years, the AAR has not only established a "Religion in the Schools" task force, it has also included several sessions related to religion in the schools on the programs of its annual meetings in Nashville and Denver. Most recently, the AAR has secured a grant from the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to support the creation of teams of schoolteachers and religion scholars. These teams will develop new teaching modules for religion in the social studies curriculum of secondary schools. Such developments indicate an increasing awareness on the part of the profession that teacher education and K-12 related activities are worthy of attention by religion scholars. They may also signal a gradual shift in the criteria that are used in making decisions about tenure and promotion — especially at comprehensive universities, and perhaps eventually at research universities as well.

Apart from the obstacles created by the specialization of academic life and its accompanying conceptions of scholarship, other obstacles to the involvement of religion scholars in teacher education and in the schools include the long-standing barriers at many colleges and universities between faculty in the humanities and social sciences on the one hand, and faculty in departments and schools of education on the other. Sometimes these barriers are administrative or institutional in nature, as in cases where the general studies curriculum, the curricula for majors, and teaching credential programs are strictly segregated and administered independently from one another. In other instances, the barriers are of a more self-imposed nature, as when scholars in the humanities and social sciences complain about a lack of attention to content on the part of their colleagues in education departments, and education professors express doubt about the pedagogical sophistication of their colleagues in the humanities and social sciences. The exact character of these mutual suspicions varies so widely from university to university that it is hard to suggest a generic strategy for overcoming them. The campus politics of each particular setting must be taken into account.

Even so, there is some indication that the gulf between the various camps is beginning to be bridged. The National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER), for example, consists of 17 settings in 15 states where teams of university arts and sciences faculty, teacher educators, and school teachers and administrators collaborate in the effort to advance the Network's agenda for the "simultaneous renewal" of public schools and the education of educators within the larger context of education in a democracy. The agenda for simultaneous

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**GRELLE II**, from p.11

renewal is based on the idea that the improvement of schools and the improvement of teacher education must go hand in hand and that traditional barriers between arts and sciences faculty, teacher educators, and schoolteachers must be broken down.[14]

Let me conclude by briefly reporting on a few of the K-12 related activities of my own department as a way of illustrating some of the ways that religion scholars might become involved with these issues. Over the past several years, my colleagues and I have worked with curriculum specialists in the public schools to organize and present workshops on Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as on such topics as religion and values in American history and society and the religions of the Hmong and other Southeast Asian immigrants. These presentations and workshops have usually been scheduled as part of daylong professional development conferences sponsored by local school districts in northern California, by the CSU, Chico Education Department, by the California History-Social Science Project, and by the California International Studies Project.[15]

Of particular interest are several recent initiatives sponsored by RISE (Resources for International Studies Education), the International Studies Project site for northern California. In 1998, members of the CSU (Chico) Religious Studies Department gave a full day presentation to 25 K-6 teachers from northeastern California who were participating in a yearlong institute, Big Rivers. The directors of the institute had chosen this theme because it could be addressed from the multiple disciplinary perspectives of geography, economics, science, politics, sociology, anthropology, and religious studies. Each session of the institute integrated California history/social science standards-based content, problem based learning pedagogy, and such international studies concepts as "context-setting," "multiple perspectives," "managing conflict," and "interconnectedness."

One day of the institute was devoted to a discussion of "Religion, Rivers, and the Sacred." I began the session with background on the First Amendment and the "what, why, and how" of teaching about religions in public school classrooms. My colleague, Dr. Sarah Pike, then shared her research on the Rio Grande as a site of conflict and interaction between Native American, Spanish, and Anglo religions and cultures, using a group discussion of Rudolfo Anaya's novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*, as a point of departure. Dr. Sarah Caldwell concluded the session with a description of her visits to the Ganges in India, and an introduction to the religious mythology and symbolism surrounding that world-famous river.

RISE subsequently sponsored two yearlong institutes devoted entirely to teaching about religions in the schools. The first institute was entitled, *Learning to Live with Our Deepest Differences: A California Standards-Based Approach to Teaching About the World's Religions*. This series of Friday evening and Saturday sessions addressed the First Amendment and classic legal cases involving religion and public education. It also included sessions on the religions of India, the Olympics as a window to understanding ancient Greek religion, conflict and continuity in the histories of Judaism and Christianity, and field trips to a local mosque and Sikh temple. The second institute was entitled, *Children of Abraham: Learning and Teaching about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. It provided an opportunity for more in-depth attention to three of the traditions that figure prominently in the new California History-Social Science Content Standards. This past semester, in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, my colleagues and I organized a three part series, *Teaching About Religion, Politics, and Global Issues*, attended by over one hundred teachers. The series included presentations on Islam, the historical roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and women in Islam.

In addition to their focus on content, these workshops must also respond to teachers' practical questions about appropriate and effective techniques for teaching about religions. Is role-playing an appropriate way to teach about diverse religious practices? Should teachers allow or encourage students to share their religious beliefs, practices, and customs? Are teachers allowed to discuss their own religious beliefs and practices? While these sorts of pedagogical questions are not entirely different from those faced by religious studies professors in state universities, they arise in a particularly sensitive way in the public schools. For this reason, it is usually a good idea for religion scholars to work as part of a team with master teachers and curriculum specialists as they seek to address such questions together.[16]

In addition to this rather piecemeal approach — what amounts to remedial education for in-service teachers — a more long-term strategy is to integrate the academic study of religions into teacher preparation and credentialing programs. There are any number of institutional and political obstacles that will likely need to be overcome in order to bring about such a reform. Yet, here again, recent developments in California may indicate a move in this direction. Since 1998, all persons applying for a Social Science teaching credential have had to satisfy Standard Nine of the California Department of Education's standards for Social Science Teacher Preparations. This standard requires each prospective social science teacher to demonstrate knowledge of the impact of religious ideals, beliefs, and values on human history and society. The course that I mentioned at the outset of this essay, *Teaching About Religions in American Public Schools*, was originally designed to help meet this requirement by preparing future teachers to approach the study of religion in an academically and constitutionally appropriate fashion.

## Conclusion

More than any other single American institution, the public schools are places where people of all different faiths and those of no religious faith come together on a regular and sustained basis. Religion and public education is perhaps the most obvious and significant area in which the academic agendas and civic responsibilities of religion scholars intersect. By attending to the academic study of religion in elementary and secondary schools, there is enormous opportunity for religion scholars to contribute to the education of their fellow citizens outside the university. There is also opportunity to contribute to the consolidation of the standing of religious studies as an academic discipline both in the university and in American public life more generally.

[1] Chana Schoenberger, "Getting to Know about You and Me", in Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas, eds., *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education*, (Nashville: The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1998), 7.11-7.12.

[2] Haynes and Thomas, 11.1.

[3] Abington School District v. Schempp, 374 US 203 (1963).

[4] Religion scholars Nicholas Piediscalzi, Robert Michaelsen, Robert Spivey, Edwin Gaustad, and Austin Creel, along with educators James Uphoff, Charles Knikker, and Thayer Warshaw, played pioneering roles in the area of religion and public education in the 1960's, '70s, and '80s. For a useful overview of collaborative efforts by the AAR as well as individual religion scholars and educators to promote the academic study of religion in the public schools, see Will, Paul J., ed., Nicholas Piediscalzi and Barbara Ann DeMartino Swyhart, assoc. eds., *Public Education Religion Studies*: An Overview. Chico, CA: American Academy of Religion, Scholars Press, 1981, as well as the more recent essay, Piediscalzi, Nicholas. "Back to the Future: Public Education Religion Studies and the AAR in the 1970s and 1990s — Unique Opportunities for Development," *Religion and Public Education*. 18:2, 1991.

[5] California State Department of Education, *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1988), 7.

[6] Ibid., 13.

[7] See Haynes, Charles C. and Marcia Beauchamp. "Taking Religion Seriously in the Social Studies Standards," Social Studies Review. Spring/Summer, 1999.

[8] 3 Rs Projects promote and encourage the religious liberty principles and civic responsibilities that flow from the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The Projects are non-profit and non-partisan programs designed to address constitutional and legal issues concerning religion in school policies and the curriculum; conflict resolution; issues of fairness, neutrality, and scholarship in the study about religion in the classroom; education for citizenship in a diverse society; religious-liberty rights of students in public schools; and ways that local communities and schools can find common ground on issues that divide them. For more information, contact Charles C. Haynes, Senior Scholar, Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, Arlington, Virginia. E-MAIL: *chaynes@freedomforum.org*.

[9] Butler, Jon and Harry S. Stout, general editors. *Religion in American Life*. (17 volumes), New York: Oxford University Press, 1999-2002.

[10] Hubbard, Benjamin J., John T. Hatfield, and James A. Santucci. *America's Religions: An Educators Guide to Beliefs and Practices*. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press, 1997.

[11] Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1987),6-7.

[12] Jacoby, 6.

[13] Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, (Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990), 15-25.

[14] See Fenstermacher, Gary D. "Agenda for Education in a Democracy," *Leadership for Educational Renewal: Developing a Cadre of Leaders*. Wilma F. Smith and Gary D. Fenstermacher, eds., San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999.

[15] For a discussion of similar efforts in other parts of California, see Hatfield, John. "Assisting Public School Instructors in Teaching about Religion," *Exchanges: Newsletter of the California State University System Institute for Teaching* and Learning. 7:1, (Winter), 1996.

[16] See Haynes and Thomas, especially 7.5-7.8, for discussion of appropriate and inappropriate ways of teaching about religion in a public school setting.

**HICKS**, from p.8

countless hours preparing new lessons on an old subject. Others who would like to teach about religion do not because of the lack of available, age-appropriate materials.

Those best suited to write curricula and to teach about religion are, naturally, teachers who have taken courses in religious studies. A cursory survey of colleges of education reveals, however, that religious studies courses do not usually count toward teacher certification.[15] Herein lies the paradox: many people agree that religion is a vital subject, but those who are trained have trouble entering the field of teaching. This should be no surprise, given that unnecessary litigation arises from the well-intended, but uninformed methods of those trying to teach about religion. Colleges of education and departments of religious studies must begin to dialogue if advancements in this area are to be made.

While noticeable challenges face secondary religious studies teachers, the final rewards far surpass the obstacles. Knowing that you fostered a new sense of awareness and empathy in a student is a satisfying accomplishment. When students state, "I understand, but I disagree," the ongoing preparation for democratic citizenship is taking place. When, in the same class, an Islamic student identifies you as a Muslim, or a Southern Baptist is certain of your Christian faith, a comfortable feeling arises in knowing that you have provided academically sound, religiously fair, and constitutionally permissible instruction. The students have grown intellectually, and their faith foundations have remained intact.

[1] See the pamphlet titled, *Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy: A Statement of Principles*, endorsed by twenty-four diverse organizations. The pamphlet is available by calling 1-800-830-3733 and requesting publication no. 95-F07.

[2] Curtis Lee Law coined the term in 1920. Quoted in Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 36.

[3] See James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 162.

[4] Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 153.

[5] Nel Noddings, *Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 143.

[6] Noddings, *Educating for Intelligent Belief*, 28.

[7] Again, the point is that all students share a received set of convictions with their parents, faith leaders, and so on. "Fundamentalist" should not be construed as a negative term, at least not when applied to adolescents.

[8] Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), 19.

[9] I have borrowed these specific terms from Schubert M. Ogden, *Doing Theology Today* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 11-17. When I explain this concept to students, I use the words "meant, means, and application."

[10] Ninian Smart, "A Curricular Paradigm for Religious Education," in Paul J. Will et. al. (eds.), *Public Education Religion Studies: An Overview* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 119.

[11] There is a danger that "presentism" trivializes religious sentiments. However, connections with other subjects need to be made in every course and the information, if it is to be learned at all, must be linked to the students' worlds.

[12] See James W. Fraser, *Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multicultural America* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin Press, 1999).

[13] History textbooks have increased coverage of religion during the past ten years, however perfunctorily. See Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously across the Curriculum* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998), and Warren A. Nord, *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 138-159.

[14] At a conference at Vanderbilt University, Jon Butler, an editor and contributor to the *Religion in American Life* series, commented on the challenges of writing for a secondary-school age audience. The 17 volume series, published by Oxford University Press, is an exceptional resource for high school teachers.

[15] For example, none of my 31 religious studies courses count toward certification — an obvious hurdle for religious studies graduates who would like to enter the field of teaching.