



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on April 3, 2018

Proposal: Teach the Bible in Public Schools

“Religion is the only solid basis of good morals; therefore education should teach the precepts of religion and the duties of man towards God,” said signatory to the Constitution Gouverneur Morris. Contrary to popular myth, this was [the common Founder view at the time](#). And while it’s not common today, some are proposing that the Bible should be a standard part of curricula. [WND.com](#) and even liberal *Time* [advocated such](#) in 2007, and the latest example is the Federalist’s David Marcus in “It’s Time To Teach The Bible In Public Schools.”



Marcus makes the typical contemporary case: that the Bible should be taught as a great work of literature and that citizens can’t count themselves educated unless they’re conversant with it. He [writes](#):

The Bible as comprised of the Old and New Testaments is, simply put, the most important and seminal work of literature in Western Civilization. While for millions of people it is also the revealed word of God, for everyone it is an indispensable font from which springs the art, history, philosophy and governmental structures of our society. Biblical literacy, which is to say a basic, functioning knowledge of the stories of the Bible, is essential to have a full understanding of how our society works and why it differs so dramatically from others. This is why it must be thoroughly taught in the public schools.

To this point, WND.com [reported](#) in 2007 that a “study by the *American Political Science Review* on the political documents of the founding era, which was from 1760-1805, discovered that 94 percent of the period’s documents were based on the Bible, with 34 percent of the contents being direct citations from the Bible. The Scripture was the bedrock and blueprint of our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, academic arenas and heritage until the last quarter of a century.”

Despite this, Marcus informs that, sadly, “almost two decades into the 21st Century, biblical literacy is slipping away from us. A recent correction to a story in *The Wall Street Journal* gives a tidy example. ‘Correction: An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated Benjamin Netanyahu said Moses brought water from Iraq. He said the water was brought from a rock.’”

It’s striking, Marcus notes, that this comical mistake got past the writer, proofreader, and editors — ostensibly educated people — at a major newspaper. But such failings are not uncommon now.

Marcus also asked Robert P. George, the McCormack Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University, about the wisdom of teaching the Bible. The academic replied:

As a matter of historical fact, the core ideas and institutions of Western civilization were shaped in decisive ways by biblical religion. That fact alone establishes the need for schools to teach our young people what the Bible says. What’s more, knowledge of the Bible is required not only to understand the great Jewish and Christian thinkers, writers, and artists of the past two thousand



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years (from Augustine and Maimonides to Luther and Newman; from Chaucer and Shakespeare to Austen and Waugh; from Michelangelo and Botticelli to Rouault and Chagall), but even to understand anti-religious Western thinkers such as Hume and Nietzsche. Whether one happens to be a believer or a skeptic, biblical illiteracy condemns one to ignorance of things that decently educated people know and understand.

In reality, the Bible is already taught in many schools. As the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools [informs](#), “To date, our Bible curriculum has been voted into 1,280 school districts (2,900 high schools) in 39 states. Over 650,000 students have already taken this course nationwide, on the high school campus, during school hours, for credit.”

Note that this not only is constitutional, it has also been [declared so](#) in recent Supreme Court decisions (and what’s constitutional and what’s declared so by judges often aren’t the same thing).

There is a danger, however. *Time* echoed many in its advocacy of teaching the Bible in schools in stating that it must be done “very, very carefully.” The magazine reflected a common secular fear that the book could be taught as an article of faith. Yet it’s also problematic if the Bible is taught as a *mere* work of literature, as this could relate the notion that it’s *definitely not God’s word*.

What’s interesting here, however, is that it’s considered constitutional to treat the Bible as mere literature but not to treat it as an article of faith — even though a correct understanding of the Constitution says otherwise.

It’s not just that the “separation of church and state” isn’t in the Constitution; the notion to the contrary is a misinterpretation that was foisted on these United States 150 years after our nation’s founding (in 1947). It’s that our First Amendment states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

The Founders specified “Congress,” *the central government’s* legislative branch, because they only feared the creation of a national church, as existed in Britain, the country against which they rebelled. In point of fact, there were established state churches at our nation’s birth — and the Founders took no issue with them.

Some may now say that the “Theory of Incorporation,” which applied the Bill of Rights to the states as well, forestalls state religious establishment. One could counter that this theory is a judicial rationalization created from whole cloth, but even that’s beside the point. Why?

Because, again, the First Amendment specifies “Congress.”

Note that the Second Amendment does *not* do this. How can this unique aspect of the First Amendment be ignored? Even if we believed the Bill of Rights should constrain the states, how can the Establishment Clause be applied to them when the Founders clearly expressed that it was a limitation on only the central government?

Of course, every state constitution I’ve seen has language mirroring that in our national one, which alone would prohibit established state churches. But the point is that it is the role of the states — not the feds — to determine what ideas, “religious” or “secular,” should prevail in the public sphere.

That’s the matter’s legality. But what of its morality? While the “separation of church and state” isn’t in the Constitution, it is in Americans’ minds and hearts. There just is this idea, this feeling, this sense that having “religion” in schools is some kind of trespass. But is this true? I addressed this notion in 2016, [writing](#):



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If the “religious” ideas in question really have been handed down by God, the Creator of the Universe and Inerrant Author of All, don’t we actually have a duty to infuse our public sphere with them? Is it not then an imperative that we immerse schoolchildren in this divine light? Of course, an atheist will respond, “Not everyone worships sky fairies! These are just man-made beliefs.”

And that’s where their argument collapses. After all, what then justifies putting the beliefs on the back of the bus? Why do you say the man-made beliefs we happen to call “secular” may be in the public square, but the man-made beliefs we happen to call “religious” may not be? If they’re all man-made, wherein lies the difference?

This reveals reality. It’s silly to say that “religious” ideas mustn’t be in the public square. There are only two possibilities: Either they’re man-made, in which case they can share the table with other man-made ideas and *may* be in schools.

Or they’re from God and *must* be in schools.

The reality is that there will always be ideas or, as we like to say using that ubiquitous secular term “values,” instilled in children in schools, and labeling them “religious” or “secular” says nothing about their validity. As it stands now, in fact, “secular” Marxism is legal to [teach as fact in government schools](#), but the sacredness of every human being is not. Does that sound like a sane constitutional interpretation?

Or does it sound more like a recipe for civilizational death?

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