



*Enriching
the
Next
Generation.*

**The Case for
Biblical Education
in America and
Specifically for
Teaching
Bible History
Courses in the
Public Schools of
Hamilton County,
Tennessee**

ENRICHING THE NEXT GENERATION

THE CASE FOR BIBLICAL EDUCATION IN AMERICA AND SPECIFICALLY FOR TEACHING BIBLE HISTORY COURSES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Biblical language permeates our conversation.** Without the study of the Bible in our schools, we run the risk of creating an avoidable deficiency in American education. (Page 3)
- **Deep knowledge requires cultural literacy.** When the schools of a nation fail adequately to transmit the literate national language and culture, the unity and effectiveness of the nation will necessarily decline. (Page 3)
- **Cultural literacy begins with Bible knowledge.** No one in the English-speaking world can be considered literate without a basic knowledge of the Bible. (Page 4)
- **Teaching the Bible is constitutionally permissible.** Through the pronouncements of both the U.S. Supreme Court and the Federal District Court, the Bible teaching program in Hamilton County’s public schools stands the test of constitutionality. (Page 5)
- **“Separation of Church and State” is a misleading metaphor.** Never appearing in the Constitution nor in any other founding era document, the “wall of separation between Church and State” in a private letter from Thomas Jefferson was not meant to limit religious activities in public, but rather to limit the power of the government to prohibit or interfere with those expressions. (Page 6)
- **Our Founding Fathers based 94% of the documents on the Bible, and 34% of the documents’ contents were direct quotations from the Bible.** The “father of public school education” said, “[The Bible] should be read in our schools in preference to all other books.” (Page 9)

- **Bible classes improve scholarship and character.** A study by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency concludes that Bible students perform better than their classmates as a whole in almost every category with reinforced moral and character development that is antithetical to engaging in criminal or delinquent behavior. (Page 10)
- **Teaching about the Bible in public schools is endorsed by a diverse group of organizations** representing constituencies of educators, lawyers, Jews, Muslims, evangelicals, and social liberals. Because of its impact on drama, poetry, fiction, history, law, art, and contemporary society, the Bible should be taught in our public schools. (Page 11)
- **True education demands a knowledge of the Bible.** A full-orbed education, whatever else it requires, demands that one have an acquaintanceship... with one certain book. That book is the Bible. (Page 13)
- **Bible in the Schools is a local phenomenon with broad local support.** Hamilton County is unique in the courses offered, the teachers' certification, the support of principals and administrators, the diversity of students taking Bible History courses, the private funding, and the endorsement of community leaders. (Page 14)
- **The real subject is the children.** Support for the teaching of Bible History is one significant way to ensure a better, brighter future by enriching the next generation with the truth and knowledge of the Bible. (Page 16)
- **Summary and conclusion.** So much of the art, music, history, law, culture, and moral standards of Western civilization are based on the Bible, that to be a culturally literate, truly educated American requires biblical knowledge. Our invitation to you is to join us in presenting this precious gift to the public school students in Hamilton County. (Page 17)

THE CASE FOR BIBLICAL EDUCATION IN AMERICA AND SPECIFICALLY FOR TEACHING BIBLE HISTORY COURSES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

BIBLICAL LANGUAGE PERMEATES OUR CONVERSATION

Two events happen within hours of each other.

On Tuesday, August 24, 2004, on National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, Tom Goldman reports on the Olympic competition in Athens, Greece. He features the U.S. softball team which has won the gold medal in a perfect tournament. In their nine games, the American women have outscored their opponents 51-1. Goldman characterizes the Americans as having played like Goliaths while winning the fans' hearts like Davids.

At noon that same day, Dr. Jack McEwen addresses the annual Kiwanis/Rotary/United Way kickoff luncheon. He makes two references to Genesis -- Adam and Eve and giants in the land. He mentions the statement in Ecclesiastes that all is vanity.

Why does reporter Goldman not need to define what he means by Goliath and David? Why is it not necessary for Dr. McEwen to explain his references to Genesis, Adam and Eve, giants in the land, Ecclesiastes, or all is vanity?

The answer is simple. Both Tom Goldman and Jack McEwen are educated Americans speaking to educated American audiences. They know the Bible well enough to be culturally literate, and they know that their audiences are biblically and culturally literate as well.

Without the study of the Bible in our schools, we run the risk of creating an avoidable deficiency in American education -- rearing a generation of cultural illiterates who will have been deprived of familiarity with the foundational document of Western civilization, the Bible.

But don't just take our word for it.

DEEP KNOWLEDGE REQUIRES CULTURAL LITERACY

The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy is a 619-page volume written in 1988 (Second Edition, Revised and Updated in 1993) by three university professors. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., is the Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English at the University of Virginia. Joseph F. Kett is a professor of history at the University of Virginia. James Trefil is the Clarence J. Robinson Professor of Physics at George Mason University. In the Introduction to their book, subtitled "What Every American Needs to Know," Drs. Hirsch, Kett, and Trefil state:

Although it is true that no two humans know exactly the same things, they often have a great deal of knowledge in common. To a large extent this common knowledge or collective memory allows people to communicate, to work together, and to live together. It forms the basis for communities, and if it is shared by enough people, it is a distinguishing characteristic of a national culture. The form and content of this common knowledge constitute one of the elements that makes each national culture unique. It is our contention that such a body of information is shared by literate Americans of the late twentieth century, and that this body of knowledge can be identified and defined.

Cultural literacy, unlike expert knowledge, is meant to be shared by everyone. It is that shifting body of information that our culture has found useful, and therefore worth preserving. This shared information is the foundation of our public discourse. It allows us to comprehend our daily newspapers and news reports, to understand our peers and leaders, and even to share our jokes. Cultural literacy is the context of what we say and read; it is part of what makes Americans American.

Dr. Hirsch further describes “The Theory Behind the Dictionary” in a second introductory article subtitled “Cultural Literacy and Education.”

The literal words we speak and read and write are just the tip of the iceberg in communication. An active understanding of the written word requires far more than the ability to call out words from a page or the possession of basic vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and inferencing techniques. We have learned that successful reading also requires a knowledge of shared, taken-for-granted information that is not set down on the page.

An important key to solving the twin problems of learning and literacy is to attain the broadly shared background knowledge I have called “cultural literacy.” My book argues that the content of this literate background knowledge is not a mystery, and that it can be taught systematically to all our students. The book further claims that if we do impart this content, we can achieve the universal literacy that is a necessary foundation for further educational, economic, and social improvements.

When the schools of a nation fail adequately to transmit the literate national language and culture, the unity and effectiveness of the nation will necessarily decline. [emphasis added]

Cultural literacy is a necessary but not sufficient attainment of an educated person. Cultural literacy is shallow; true education is deep. But our analysis of reading and learning suggests the paradox that broad, shallow knowledge is the best route to deep knowledge. Because broad knowledge enables us to read and learn effectively, it is the best guarantee that we will continue to read, and learn, and deepen our knowledge. True literacy has always opened doors -- not just to deep knowledge and economic success, but also to other people and other cultures.

CULTURAL LITERACY BEGINS WITH BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

The very first of the twenty-three chapters in *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, What Every American Needs to Know* is “The Bible.” Before launching into the alphabetical listing (from Abraham and Isaac to Zion, Mount) of biblical expressions necessary to be known by the culturally literate contemporary American, the authors have this to say about the Bible:

The Bible, the holy book of JUDAISM and CHRISTIANITY, is the most widely known book in the English-speaking world.

No one in the English-speaking world can be considered literate without a basic knowledge of the Bible. [emphasis added] *Literate people in INDIA, whose religious traditions are not based on the Bible but whose common language is English, must know about the Bible in order to understand English within their own country. All educated speakers of American English need to understand what is meant when someone describes a contest as being between DAVID and Goliath, or whether a person who has the “wisdom of SOLOMON” is wise or foolish, or whether saying “My cup runneth over” means the person feels fortunate or unfortunate. Those who cannot use or understand such allusions cannot fully participate in literate English.*

The Bible is also essential for understanding many of the moral and spiritual values of our CULTURE, whatever our religious beliefs. The story of ABRAHAM and ISAAC concerns our deepest feelings about the relations between parents and children. The story of Job is a major representation in our tradition of being patient during suffering. The PARABLES and sayings of JESUS, such as “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,” are so often alluded to that they need to be known by Americans of all faiths.

The linguistic and cultural importance of the Bible is a fact that no one denies. Nonetheless, elementary knowledge of the Bible has declined among young people in recent years. [emphasis added]

*The Bible is a central book in our culture, just as the KORAN is central in other nations, whose citizens need to know more about the Koran than about the Bible. The logical conclusion is that our schools need to teach more about the Bible than about the Koran, but they have a responsibility to teach about both. **Far from being illegal or undesirable, teaching about the Bible is not only consistent with our Constitution, it is essential to our literacy.*** [emphasis added]

Should we not admit, then, that teaching about the Bible is essential to our children’s education? But is it really consistent with our Constitution? Is teaching Bible in our public schools legal?

TEACHING THE BIBLE IS CONSTITUTIONALLY PERMISSIBLE

U. S. District Judge Frank W. Wilson has ruled that, done properly, “no constitutional barrier would arise to such classroom instruction.” Consider these excerpts from Judge Wilson’s Memorandum of September 5, 1980:

For a Bible study course offered in public schools to be Constitutionally permissible under the First Amendment Establishment Clause, the following tests must be met: (a) the nature, intent and purpose of the course must be secular; (b) the primary effect of the course must neither advance nor inhibit religion, and (c) the course must be offered in a manner that avoids excessive entanglement between government and religion. 468 F. Supp. 133 at 146.

*The ultimate test of the constitutionality of any course of instruction founded upon the Bible must depend upon classroom performance. It is that which is taught in the classroom that renders a course so founded constitutionally permissible or constitutionally impermissible. If that which is taught seeks either to disparage or to encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs, it is constitutionally impermissible in a public school setting. If that which is taught avoids such religious instruction and is confined to objective and non-devotional instruction in biblical literature, biblical history and biblical social customs, all with the purpose of helping students gain “a greater appreciation of the Bible as a great work of literature” and source of “countless works of literature, art and music” or of assisting students acquire “greater insight into the many historical events recorded in the Bible” or of affording students greater insight into the “many social customs upon which the Bible has had a significant influence”, all as proposed in the Curriculum Guide, **no constitutional barrier would arise to such classroom instruction.** 474 F. Supp. 525 at 531.[emphasis added]*

Judge Wilson’s ruling simply applies to our local context the prior judgment of the United States Supreme Court in a 1963 ruling:

*It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. **Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.** 374 U.S. 203 at 225, 83 S.Ct. at 1572. [emphasis added]*

Being in continuous operation since 1922, the Bible teaching program in Hamilton County’s public schools has stood the test of time. **Through the pronouncements of both the U.S. Supreme Court and the Federal District Court, it also stands the test of constitutionality.**

But is the teaching of Bible in our public schools consistent with the intentions of our country’s Founding Fathers? Let’s examine that issue and attempt to answer that question.

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE: THE MISLEADING METAPHOR

In his discussion of *Legal Guidelines* applicable to the case before him, Judge Frank W. Wilson explained the First Amendment:

There are two clauses in the First Amendment that deal with the subject of religion. The Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibit the free exercise thereof...” Lay persons often refer to the first of these two clauses as requiring “Separation of Church and State” and to the second as assuring “Freedom of Religion”. A more accurate summarization and abbreviation of the clauses, and that used within the legal community, is to refer to the first clause as the “Establishment Clause” and the second as the “Free Exercise Clause”. 468 F. Supp. 133 at 142.

In an editorial titled “Misreading the Constitution” in the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* on June 9, 2004, Associate Publisher Lee Anderson writes to the point:

*The most familiar expression used in attacks seeking to snuff out public expressions concerning God, prayer and the Bible is “separation of church and state.” **That phrase has been used so often and so authoritatively that many people do not realize that no such words were ever written into the Constitution.** (They come from a personal letter by Thomas Jefferson in a quite different context.) [emphasis added]*

To examine the “quite different context”, we borrow from the scholarly Constitutional research of David Barton in *Original Intent: The Courts, The Constitution, and Religion* (WallBuilder Press, 2000, 3rd edition, 3rd printing, January 2004). Chapter 3 of Barton’s book is titled “The Misleading Metaphor,” the expression used by Justice William Rehnquist to describe “separation of church and state,” which term appears not in the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, or any other founding document, but in an exchange of letters between President Thomas Jefferson and the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut.

Upon his election as President, the Danbury Baptists wrote Jefferson a letter of praise on October 7, 1801. A portion of Jefferson’s short and polite reply on January 1, 1802, assuring them that the free exercise of religion would never be interfered with by the government is as follows:

Gentlemen, -- The affectionate sentiments of esteem and approbation which you are so good as to express towards me on behalf of the Danbury Baptist Association give me the highest satisfaction.... Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God; that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship; that the legislative powers of government reach actions only and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.

Barton observes:

*Very simply,... **the “wall” of the Danbury letter [was] not to limit religious activities in public; rather [it was] to limit the power of the government to prohibit or interfere with those expressions.** [emphasis added]*

Earlier courts long understood Jefferson’s intent. In fact, when Jefferson’s letter was invoked by the Court (only once prior to the 1947 Everson case — the Reynolds v. United States case in 1878), unlike today’s Courts which publish only his eight-word separation phrase, that Court published Jefferson’s full letter, and then concluded:

*Coming as this does from an acknowledged leader of the advocates of the measure, it [Jefferson’s letter] may be accepted almost as an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the Amendment thus secured. **Congress was deprived of all legislative power over mere [religious] opinion, but was left free to reach actions which were in violation of social duties or subversive of good order.** [emphasis added]*

That court then succinctly summarized Jefferson’s intent for “separation of church and state”:

[T]he rightful purposes of civil government are for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order. In th[is]... is found the true distinction between what properly belongs to the church and what to the State.

*Therefore, if Jefferson's letter is to be used today, let its context be clearly given — as in previous years. Furthermore, that single letter should never be invoked as a stand-alone document. Earlier Courts had always viewed Jefferson's Danbury letter for what it was: a personal, private letter to a specific group. **There is probably no other instance in America's history where words spoken by a single individual in a private letter -- words clearly divorced from their context -- have become the sole authorization for a national judicial policy.** A proper analysis of Jefferson's views must include his numerous other statements on the First Amendment. [emphasis added]*

One further note should be made about the now infamous "separation" dogma. The Congressional Records from June 7 to September 25, 1789, record the months of discussions and debates of the ninety Founding Fathers who framed the First Amendment. Significantly, during those debates not one of those ninety Framers ever mentioned the phrase "separation of church and state." It seems logical that if this had been the intent of the Founding Fathers for the First Amendment — as is so frequently asserted — then at least one of those ninety would have mentioned that phrase; none did.

It disturbs us, therefore, that words framed to describe a "wall" to keep the government's hands off of personal expressions of convictions and beliefs has been turned on its head now to be invoked for the exact opposite intent, i.e., to keep the individual from being able to express his beliefs in public.

Any contemporary American has the right to hold and express a personal belief in the "separation of church and state." Even certain modern courts have done so. It cannot be stated with historical accuracy, however, that our Founding Fathers, the framers of the U. S. Constitution and founders of our public schools, had any such intent.

But for Bible in the Schools, keeping religion out of public expressions or out of governmental institutions (schools) is not an issue. The Bible History courses offered as electives in the middle and high schools of Hamilton County are not religion courses. The Bible is taught as a text book from which its words speak for itself. Highly qualified, state-certified, professional teachers are carefully trained and supervised to insure that, as instructed by Judge Frank Wilson, they seek neither "to disparage nor to encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs."

Bible History, as taught in Hamilton County, meets the Constitutional tests enumerated in Judge Wilson's 1980 ruling, namely that

- (a) the nature, intent and purpose of the course must be secular,
- (b) the primary effect of the course must neither advance nor inhibit religion, and
- (c) the course must be offered in a manner that avoids excessive entanglement between government and religion.

HOW OUR FOUNDING FATHERS VIEWED THE BIBLE

The United States of America is what it is today primarily because of the beliefs, character, wisdom, and foresight of our Founding Fathers. Our freedoms and our form of government have stood the test of time. What did these men hold in common that motivated them to pledge their honor, lives, and fortunes to the noble experiment whose fruits we now enjoy? Overwhelmingly, they believed the Bible. They valued its precepts. They lived by its principles. They quoted its language.

There was a secular study done by the American Political Review on the political documents of the Founding Era, which was 1760-1805. This study found that **94% of the documents that went into the Founding Era were based on the Bible, and of that, 34% of the contents were direct quotations from the Bible.**

Listen to the voices of some great Americans whose lives and convictions are responsible for giving us the heritage under which we live today.

Noah Webster said, “The Bible is the chief moral cause of all that is good, and the best corrector of all that is evil, in human society, the best Book for regulating temporal concerns of men, and the only Book that can serve as an infallible guide to future felicity.”

John Adams put his dream into words: “Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited.... What a Eutopia, what a Paradise would this region be.”

“[The Bible] is a book worth more than all other books that were ever printed,” said Patrick Henry.

Consider this terse statement by John Jay, original Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court: “The Bible is the best of all books.”

Henry Laurens was president of the Continental Congress, a U.S. Diplomat, and was selected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Mr. Laurens believed that, “The Bible is a book containing the history of all men and of all nations and is a necessary part of a polite education.”

Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a noted physician, and treasurer of the U.S. Mint for 14 years, is also referred to as the “father of public school education.” Dr. Rush stated, “The Bible, when not read in schools, is seldom read in any subsequent period of life....**[It] should be read in our schools in preference to all other books** from its containing the greatest portion of that kind of knowledge which is calculated to produce private and public temporal happiness.” [emphasis added]

Other great men who followed our Founding Fathers have also uttered high praise for the ancient document we know as the Bible. Robert E. Lee thought the Bible was important: “The Bible is a book in comparison with which all others are of minor importance, and which in all my perplexities and distresses has never failed to give me light and strength.”

George Washington Carver expressed his profound appreciation for this Book of Books with a rhetorical question: “The secret of my success? It is simple. It is found in the Bible.”

Our Presidents have universally held the Bible in high regard as a book of great practical and educational value.

Listen to a Republican, President Ronald Regan: “Within the covers of the Bible are all the answers for all the problems men face. The Bible can touch hearts, order minds and refresh souls.”

And to a Democrat, President Franklin D. Roosevelt: “We cannot read all the history of our rise and development as a nation, without reckoning with the place the Bible has occupied in shaping the advances of the Republic.”

And to another of our Founding Fathers, President John Quincy Adams: “To a man of liberal education, the study of history is not only useful, and important, but altogether indispensable, **and with regard to the history contained in the Bible...it is not so much praiseworthy to be acquainted with it as it is shameful to be ignorant of it.**” [emphasis added]

In a speech on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives on October 2, 2001, our own congressman, The Honorable Zach Wamp, extolled the influence of the Bible on the history and culture of America:

*The Bible has had a monumental impact upon the development of our Western civilization, whose literature, art, and music are filled with images and inspiration that can be traced to its pages. **More importantly, our laws, our sense of justice, our charity, and our moral standards all find their origin in the Bible.*** [emphasis added]

The Bible, which is a fundamental part of our national heritage, has had a more profound affect on the moral fabric of American society than any other document. It was the basis for our Founding Fathers’ belief in the inalienable rights of the individual — rights which they found explicit in the Bible. This same sense of individual freedom and justice permeates the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The influence of both the Old and New Testaments has formed the basis of our laws, our national character, and our system of values. It was the biblical view of man — affirming the dignity and worth of the human person made in the image of our Creator — which inspired the principles upon which the United States is founded.

Through the support of Bible in the Schools, contributors in Hamilton County give the priceless gift of a biblical education annually to some 3,000 of the 20,000 students in our middle and high schools. At the invitation of our principals and through the generosity of our donors, the five Bible History courses are provided at no taxpayer expense.

BIBLE CLASSES IMPROVE SCHOLARSHIP AND CHARACTER

With the current emphasis on character education within the public schools of Hamilton County, it is encouraging to note the positive impact that Bible classes have on character and behavior. Although such an impact is to be expected by anyone familiar with the sound moral

teachings in the Bible, it is surprising and encouraging that a study has found that even occasional Bible classes have a beneficial effect on students' educational experience in academic subjects as well.

This study was conducted in the fall of 2002 as a program evaluation of the Oakland, California, Released Time Bible Education Program by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). The Executive Summary of the study states the following:

During a study conducted in the fall of 2002, NCCD concluded:

- *A comparative review between the academic performance scores of Oakland Released Time students and all 4th and 5th graders in Released Time schools reveals that **students in Oakland Released Time perform better than their classmates as a whole in almost every category.** [emphasis added]*
- *Oakland Released Time's curricula reinforce key literacy components such as spelling and reading comprehension, among others, and reflect positively on the relevancy of the instruction to the academic performance of children participating in the program.*
- *Overall, the scores of Oakland Released Time students improved after one year (between the academic year 2001-2002 and 2002-2003) in three categories of literacy skills: comprehension, spelling, and vocabulary.*
- *Oakland Released Time provides youth with strong adult mentorship and bonding.*
- ***Oakland Released Time reinforces positive moral and character development that is antithetical to engaging in criminal or delinquent behavior.** [emphasis added]*
- *Oakland Released Time interacts with youth who experience many of the academic problems (poor performance, illiteracy, etc.) that are correlated with a history of delinquency.*

Overall, Oakland Released Time contributes positively to improving Oakland public schools.

If a Released Time Bible Education Program receives such rave reviews in Oakland, California, think of the positive contributions our daily Bible History classes make in the lives of our students here in Hamilton County, Tennessee.

APPROVED BY JEWS, MUSLIMS, AND THE NEA

The Bible and Public Schools, a First Amendment Guide was published in 1999 by the National Bible Association and First Amendment Center. The surprising number of diverse organizations that endorsed the Guide includes the following:

American Association of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers

American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
Anti-Defamation League
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs
Christian Educators Association International
Christian Legal Society
Council on Islamic Education
National Association of Evangelicals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A
National Council for the Social Studies
National Education Association
National School Boards Association
People for the American Way Foundation
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Four pertinent points are included in the Guide:

1. *Many Americans continue to hold the mistaken view that the Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s concerning prayer and devotional Bible-reading prohibited students from expressing their faith in a public school. Actually, the Court did not eliminate prayer or the Bible from public schools, it barred state-sponsored religious practices, including devotional use of the Bible by public school officials.*
2. *Educators widely agree that study about religion, where appropriate, is an important part of a complete education. Part of that study includes learning about the Bible in courses such as literature and history. **Knowledge of biblical stories and concepts contributes to our understanding of literature, history, law, art, and contemporary society.** [emphasis added]*
3. *When teaching about the Bible in a public school, teachers must understand the important distinction between advocacy, indoctrination, proselytizing, and the practice of religion -- which is unconstitutional -- and teaching about religion that is objective, nonjudgmental, academic, neutral, balanced, and fair -- which is constitutional.*
4. *Much drama, poetry, and fiction contain material from the Bible.*

Thus the writers and endorsers of the *First Amendment Guide* concur with the rationale of the Hamilton County Department of Education and the Public School Bible Study Committee. While practicing or promoting religion in public schools is both inappropriate and unconstitutional, teaching the Bible as an academic subject is not. **Because of its impact on drama, poetry, fiction, history, law, art, and contemporary society, the Bible should be taught in our public schools.** Knowledge of biblical stories and concepts contributes greatly to our students' understanding of American culture and, in fact, Western civilization. To deprive our students of such an opportunity would be an educational injustice, which fortunately, we in Hamilton County, Tennessee, have the ability to avoid.

TRUE EDUCATION DEMANDS A KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE

Dr. James L. Fowle was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga for thirty-eight years, from 1929 to 1967. Not only did Dr. Fowle serve as pastor of this leading downtown congregation, but he taught at the University of Chattanooga and gave significant leadership to many local community service organizations both as a board member and premier fund raiser. His doctorate and two honorary degrees were indicative of his intellect and scholarship. He was widely regarded as the “Chaplain of Chattanooga.”

Dr. Fowle titled one of his sermons, “True Education Demands a Knowledge of the Bible.” He quotes the late Dr. Daniel L. Marsh, President of Boston University, in speaking to students of this great university:

***A full-orbed education, whatever else it requires, demands that you have an acquaintanceship... with one certain book....** There are a few books — relatively very few — that must be read by everybody who aims to be educated in any sense of the term, or even moderately well informed. One of these bears such a vital relationship to our culture, our mores, that a knowledge of it is absolutely indispensable to anyone who desires to feel intellectually at home in the American scene. **That book is the Bible.** [emphasis added]*

Dr. Fowle believed and taught that no one can be well educated without a knowledge of the Bible. “Of all the books that come from our printing presses,” he said in this sermon, “there is none so universally popular as the Book of Books. The Bible was the first book to be printed. It is the best seller in every book store.”

Reflecting the same sentiments as both Judge Frank W. Wilson and the authors and endorsers of the *First Amendment Guide*, Dr. Fowle attested to the value of biblical knowledge in understanding and appreciating the best in Western civilization.

Not only has the Bible been the inspirer of literature, but it has also influenced music, sculpture and art. The great cathedrals and their paintings, mosaics and statuary were created by those who caught their inspiration from the Bible. Architects, like Brunelleschi and Giotto, and sculptors like Donatello and Michelangelo, painters like Raphael and Correggio used Bible figures for their models. The spirit of the Bible breathes through the great oratorios and reaches a marvelous climax in the “Creation” and “Messiah.”

As documented by the three university professors who wrote *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, Dr. Fowle reminded his congregation that the Bible should be taught to our children to enable them to understand and converse in contemporary American English.

You cannot read a copy of any modern publication such as Life, Saturday Evening Post, Reader’s Digest, Look, or any of the rest, without finding reference to Bible stories, language or figures of speech.

In light of what we have seen about the Bible, why should we make it a closed book in our schools, in our homes? Why do you not read the best not only from a literary standpoint but also from a spiritual, religious standpoint? Teach it to your children.

Since 1922 the public schools in Hamilton County have been teaching the Bible to our children. Multiple generations of students have had their educational experience enriched thereby. We hope you will agree with us and with the numerous sources cited herein that true education does demand a knowledge of the Bible.

LOCAL PHENOMENON, LOCAL SUPPORT

As far as we have been able to determine, Hamilton County, Tennessee, is the only community in the nation with an asset like Bible in the Schools. The public schools in other communities may offer an occasional Bible course taught by a volunteer teacher. Some, like Oakland, California, offer periodic Released Time Bible classes, usually at the elementary school level. We know of no other school district, however, that offers its students a biblical educational opportunity of the scope provided by the Hamilton County Department of Education.

What are the aspects of our local program that make it unique?

First are the courses themselves. **Five for-credit Bible History electives** are offered in the middle and high schools of Hamilton County. Students in our middle schools may elect to take Genesis in the sixth grade, Exodus in the seventh grade, and the Life of Jesus in the eighth grade. High schools offer Old Testament Survey and New Testament Survey.

Second are the teachers who are employed, trained, and supervised by the Department of Education. Bible History teachers have the same qualifications, certifications, tenure, and other professional standards, requirements, and benefits as all other teachers in the district. In fact, we like to say that the **Bible History teachers are super-certified**. Not only do they meet the minimum state licensing requirements of all teachers, but Bible History teachers also are required to have completed 18 quarter hours (12 semester hours) of Bible courses as part of their college education. Currently there are thirteen such highly qualified Bible History teachers in the Hamilton County schools.

Third are the **principals and administrators**. Bible History is taught only in schools where the principals desire the courses and where the courses fit into the schools' curricula. In the fall of 2004, Bible History is offered in sixteen middle and high schools at the invitation of the principals and also with the full endorsement of the Board of Education, the superintendent, and school administrators. In fact, there are additional schools whose pending requests for Bible teachers can be filled only when funding is available. Three such schools — Brown Middle School, Red Bank High School, and East Ridge Middle School — are our highest priority. If funding were provided, these three schools would offer Bible History to their students almost immediately.

We have in our files three letters written in February 2004 from East Ridge Middle School that are indicative of the local demand for biblical education. The principal writes:

As principal of East Ridge Middle School I am requesting the opportunity to begin the program of Bible in the Schools here in our school.

As educators, the teachers and I feel that our students could benefit from the study of the Bible as it relates to the origins of the cultures in the Middle East. Since this area of the world is constantly in the news and so much of the culture has its roots in the conflicts discussed in Biblical History, understanding as much as we can about this area would prepare our students to interpret the everyday happenings in world news.

I also feel that the study of the literature of the Bible would enhance our students' experience with varied types of prose and poetry. Literary scholars have praised the Psalms as some of the finest examples of ancient poetry ever written. Exposure to this Hebrew poetry will broaden the students' understanding of the mind of the ancients and help them to understand how some of these writings have influenced our present day literature and culture.

I respectfully request the opportunity to introduce the program of Bible in the Schools at East Ridge Middle School in the very near future.

The East Ridge Middle School assistant principal includes these words in his letter:

ERMS is a school in transition. A group less familiar with our cultural allusions to Bible history and literature is fast populating our school. As such, the lack of a program in Bible History is a flaw in our attempt to provide a well-rounded education for our students. When our students get to high school and college they will be less able to communicate their ideas or to understand the ideas of others with this deficiency.

The values taught in our culture are mirrored in the Bible. Our school attempts to teach these values. It is understood that establishing an authority for values heightens their impact on the learner. The Bible is an established authority in our culture. That is, many people accept its teachings as being of great importance. Thus, our familiarizing the students of ERMS with the moral teachings of western civilization through the Bible can only have a positive impact on the development of our students.

I certainly hope that in the near future this program can be added to our school's course offerings. I know that there is great support for it among our faculty, students, and the community. The time is right for Bible History at ERMS.

The third letter is from the school's guidance counselor and states, in part,

As a teacher I have taught at Chattanooga High School, East Ridge High School, and Ooltewah Middle School, and all of these schools had very active Bible classes. I was able to see the influence these classes had on the overall school atmosphere as well as in the lives of my students. In addition I was privileged to serve as a substitute teacher in the Bible in the Schools program when Baird McClure was the supervisor and was able to see how the program functioned on all levels — elementary, middle, and high schools.

At East Ridge Middle School we need the Bible program to add diversity to our related arts program.

The fourth unique aspect of our local program is the **diversity of students** who reflect the changing cross-section of the greater Chattanooga community. Just as the schools reflect the diversity of the population at large, so the Bible History classes attract the same diversity of

student enrollees. Students represent various socio- economic backgrounds, ethnic origins, and religious traditions. It is estimated that approximately half of the students receive no other biblical education than what is provided by Bible in the Schools. In schools where Bible History is offered, more than seventy percent of students will elect one or more Bible History courses prior to graduation. Your partnership with Bible in the Schools would enable other students to express such sentiments as this young man in one of our local schools: “Bible History is interesting. I had never picked up a Bible a day in my life. I just used to hear about people talking about it. It’s a really good book in fact. Maybe the best.”

Deprive more than 3,000 public school students each year of such an experience? Not if we can help it!

The fifth unique aspect is its **private funding**. No public (tax) dollars are used for payment of the Bible History teachers. Volunteer donors make the course offerings available to our students as a gift to the community. Funding comes from people and groups who appreciate our country’s biblical heritage and who desire to enrich the next generation with the truth and knowledge of the Bible. The Public School Bible Study Committee (PSBSC) is a group of volunteers who give not only their own resources, but also their time in telling this incredible story to current and prospective donors. Sometimes referring to itself as Bible in the Schools, the PSBSC, a 501(c)(3) organization, gathers the tax-deductible donations and remits them to the Hamilton County Department of Education as full reimbursement for the salaries, benefits, and other related costs of the Bible History teachers. Broad community support is indicated by the sources of these funds, which include individuals (51%), foundations (33%), churches and businesses (15%), and other (1%). The budget for 2004-05 is \$795,045 of which 85% will go directly to the classroom and 15% to administration and fund raising.

The sixth and final phenomenon associated with Bible in the Schools is the **endorsement of a broad range of community leaders**. Some of these leaders serve on the Board of Directors of the Public School Bible Study Committee. These are the twenty-three men and women who are responsible for providing this quality program and of securing and safeguarding the resources to make it happen. Equally impressive are the members of our Board of Reference, some of whom have previously served on the Board of Directors and all of whom have eagerly endorsed this community asset. The membership of both of these boards is listed in an attachment to this case statement.

Yes, the citizens and schools of Hamilton County, Tennessee, are the beneficiaries of a local phenomenon with the broadest conceivable local support.

THE REAL SUBJECT IS THE CHILDREN

After the vote by the Hamilton County Commission against a property tax increase, much of which would have provided additional funding to local education, the August 19, 2004, edition of the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* carried a full-page advertisement. In this ad, the outstanding community leaders (board and staff) of the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, Inc. expressed their concerns under the title “It’s Supposed to be about the Children.”

As Chattanooga equally interested in a quality educational experience for our children, Bible in the Schools appreciates the sentiments expressed by the Foundation. Here are some of the statements from that message followed by our comments in parenthesis.

- The proper focus is the impact on our children. (*Our courses impact more than 3,000 students each year.*)
- The long-term economic success of this community is directly tied to the quality of our public education system. (*And so is the long-term moral character of this community.*)
- For the community, education brings social stability and safety. Illiteracy and low educational attainment are core causes of crime, poverty and drug abuse. (*The Oakland Released Time study demonstrated the Bible's impact on increasing morality and decreasing delinquency.*)
- All students deserve access to high quality, public education. (*True education demands a knowledge of the Bible.*)
- Significant private resources from both local and prominent national funders have been committed to improve our schools. (*Bible in the Schools is one local source through which hundreds of thousands of dollars each year are paid to cover the costs of public school teachers.*)
- This is a generous and progressive community. In the past, it has been willing to commit significant assets to the continued improvement of public education. (*Bible in the Schools has been doing so since 1922 and, with your generosity, will continue to offer our entire series of elective courses to thousands more students in the future.*)
- You are also a steward of the present and a guardian of the future. (*In fact, the Public School Bible Study Committee considers itself the steward of a sacred trust whose beneficiaries are the students in Hamilton County's public schools.*)
- If our efforts go no further than our own self-interest and our own present time, we fall short of what citizenship, religion and mutual obligation have always expected of us. (*Bible in the Schools provides an immediate and reliable avenue of philanthropy for meeting our mutual obligations to the educational enhancement of future generations of students.*)
- Look to the future. Demand excellence. Support what it takes to achieve it. (***Support for the teaching of Bible History is one significant way to ensure a better, brighter future.***)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We the board of the Public Bible Study Committee (Bible in the Schools) have stated the case for biblical education in America and specifically for teaching Bible History courses in the public schools of Hamilton County, Tennessee. While attempts by public school teachers to

change a student's religious beliefs by either disparaging or encouraging particular dogmas are unconstitutional, objectively teaching the Bible as an academic subject is both constitutionally permissible and educationally necessary. **So much of the art, music, history, law, culture, and moral standards of Western civilization are based on the Bible, that to be culturally literate, a truly educated American requires biblical knowledge.**

Representative of the views of many other Founding Fathers and former presidents is the statement of John Quincy Adams that "with regard to the history contained in the Bible... it is not so much praiseworthy to be acquainted with it as it is shameful to be ignorant of it."

Fortunately, students in Hamilton County have had the opportunity to study the Bible in their public school classrooms since 1922. In 2004-05 more than 3,000 students in 16 middle and high schools will elect one or more of the five for-credit Bible History courses. The 13 certified, professional teachers are selected, employed, and supervised by the Hamilton County Department of Education. Funding is provided through private, charitable donations. The Public School Bible Study Committee is a 501(c)(3) organization through which tax-deductible contributions are transmitted to the Department of Education, thereby making the elective Bible History courses a gift to the community at no taxpayer expense.

The mission of Bible in the Schools is to create citizens of character by enriching the next generation with the truth and knowledge of the Bible.

Our vision is to give every public school student in Hamilton County, Tennessee, the opportunity to elect the study of the Bible, the most popular and influential book ever written, the foundational document of Western civilization.

We view our purpose as being to provide a course on the Bible for the students of Hamilton County schools. For the young people of greater Chattanooga, the program provides Bible History courses taught by qualified teachers, unshaded by interpretation, and presented in a controlled curriculum.

Our invitation to you is to join us in presenting this precious gift to the public school students in Hamilton County. By your financial contribution for the cost of one student (\$250) to the full support of one teacher (\$60,000), you will be partnering with us as together our investments enrich the next generation with the truth and knowledge of the Bible.

Please consider an investment in the next generation!

Public School Bible Study Committee
(Bible in the Schools)
L. B. (Pete) Austin III, Chairman
Douglas K. Stromberg, President
Fall 2004