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ARCHIVES

BRIEF STUDIES

PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND RELIGION

Many books, articles, and other pronouncements published in the past decade by individuals, churches, and education associations give evidence of mounting concern in the United States about the place of religion in public education. Half of our children are growing up without regular instruction in religion. The majority of the other half are expected to thrive on a diet of less than one hour a week of religious instruction, often imparted by unskilled teachers. Religious ignorance, moral confusion, and spiritual needs are growing to catastrophic proportions. Can adequate and effective ways be found of providing religious education for all children and youth, perhaps through our public schools? Can a solution be found of the American dilemma in education which is caused by the exclusion, on the one hand, of sectarian religious instruction from the public school curriculum, and by the resultant inclusion, on the other hand, of the religion of secularism expressed through silence about religion?

One of the 1953 publications on this subject bears the title *The Function of the Public Schools in Dealing with Religion* (Washington, D.C.: The American Council on Education, 146 pages, $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$. \$2.00). The third in a series of reports on the appropriate relation of religion to public education in the United States, this book represents another effort of the American Council on Education to discover a pathway upon which American education can be diverted legally and with popular approval from the road that leads to nihilism and chaos. The report was prepared by the Council's Committee on Religion and Education after a sixteen-month exploratory study. The Committee's findings, conclusions, and recommendations are based on information obtained through questionnaires and opinionnaires from 4,500 representative educational and religious leaders.

A chapter containing many illustrations of current practice at all levels of public education strikingly reveals the fact that there is no clear-cut and generally observed policy with respect to the relation of religion to public education. Practice falls into three patterns defined as (1) avoidance of religion, on legal, personal, and prudential grounds; (2) planned religious activities, such as devotional opening exercises, religious programs in celebration of major church festivals, grace before meals and prayers before athletic contests, sponsorship of religious clubs in school buildings, the taking of Sunday

school and church census, elective courses in the Bible, and credit toward high school graduation for Bible study outside school; and (3) factual study of religion wherever and whenever it is intrinsic to learning experience in social studies, literature, art, music, and other fields. . . . Reported opinions of educational and religious leaders cover "the entire range from the most extreme opposition to any place for religion in the public school to the most extreme insistence that the public schools should teach a common core of religious belief approved by the dominant religious groups of the community."

The Committee's own position with respect to the teaching of religion in public schools may be summarized as follows: Although the public school is limited by law in its treatment of religion, it is vitally important that the public school deal with religion, lest through silence about religion it become an antireligious factor in the community. On the other hand, a "common core" or set of basic propositions acceptable to Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Jews cannot be taught in public schools, even if found, because nonreligious groups in the communities would maintain that their rights were violated by an attempt to inculcate general propositions embodying religious beliefs. In the Committee's judgment, therefore, the factual study of religion in public schools, like the factual study of economic and political institutions and principles of our country, is the most promising approach to a democratic solution of the problem. It is justified by the requirements of a fundamental general education; and it is thoroughly consistent with the principle of religious liberty, the tradition of separation of Church and State, and modern educational theory and practice. Before significant progress can be made in this respect, however, extensive experimentation must be made under practical conditions in public elementary and secondary schools and in teacher education institutions, to the end that the feasibility and desirability of this approach may be thoroughly tested. Community approval, teacher preparation, methods, and instructional materials must be studied and tested before the Committee's proposal can be adopted as a policy and put into general practice in a variety of programs according to the character and wish of each community.

Christians may well approve the Committee's proposal if the introduced factual study of religion will be of the right kind, engaged in under the right conditions, and directed by the right kind of teachers. On the basis of these assumptions, factual study of religion can be envisioned as serving in many instances to support and reinforce the home and the church in teaching religion. At its best, it can be

expected in some measure to achieve the stated aims "to develop religious literacy, intelligent understanding of the role of religion in human affairs, and a sense of obligation to explore the resources that have been found in religion for achieving durable convictions and personal commitments."

Many misgivings and fears, however, press for utterance. In the factual study of religion in public schools the teacher will play a central role. Which teachers will direct such study? The regular teachers, among whom not a few are and will remain religious illiterates, biased partisans, and militant naturalists? Or special teachers trained to such an extent and in such a manner that they can be truly factual and tolerant in teaching religion competently without revealing their personal attitudes and convictions? Or denominational teachers who come into the classrooms at designated points in the teaching schedule to present the facts about their denominational religion? Can and will not important factual materials be given deviant interpretation by persuaded Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, Humanists, and Naturalists? How can guarantee be supplied that the interpretation given by any one of these will be satisfactory to deviant religious groups? The exploratory studies and experiments recommended by the Committee may provide specific answers to these questions.

Furthermore, will the factual study of religion in the public elementary and high schools promote community peace or community conflict? If religiously mixed communities are to devise their own programs for the factual study of religion in their schools, they will be able in many instances to do it only by unionistic, indifferentistic compromise or by majority rule. Religious compromise is repulsive to true followers of Him who is "THE Way, THE Truth, and THE Life." Majority rule in religious matters leads to intolerance and bitter conflict. Any opposition by confessional groups, who cannot in good conscience adopt the program imposed by a majority rule, will be branded as divisive and therefore as unpatriotic and un-American. Early Christians in the Roman Empire, unable for conscience' sake to submit to majority will and practice, suffered bitter and bloody persecutions as an unpatriotic, divisive element in the State. God preserve us from majority rule in religion!

Finally, what is "factual"? That which is factual to one may be illusory to another. The extreme naturalist will object to the "factual" study in public schools of any and every theistic religion on the ground that it is not proper to include in our educational curricula what many people are quite convinced is illusion.

We predict that every effort to introduce the factual study of religion into our public schools must eventuate in a growing conviction that the one solution of the American dilemma in education, unsatisfactory as this solution may appear to many, is the establishment of many thousands of Christian elementary, secondary, and higher schools, requiring an undreamed-of outpouring of prayers, efforts, and money by Christian denominations. Nothing less will do. Compromise will be ineffective. The fight between theism and naturalism in education cannot be evaded. May God graciously decrease the difficulties and prosper the work of Christian hands by making many more Christians.

St. Louis, Mo.

A. G. MERKENS

1 CORINTHIANS 7:36-38

EDITORIAL NOTE: This article opposes the most widely accepted "father-daughter (or, ward)" interpretation of this difficult passage, an interpretation adopted again by F. W. Grosheide in the most recent commentary on this Epistle. It also rejects the "spiritual marriage theory," which recently has found a number of advocates, e.g., J. Moffatt. It advocates a theory put forth about eighty years ago by the Dutch scholar von Manen, which may be called the "engaged couple theory."

Many commentators have made this text very difficult by making it refer to a father and his daughter. "Father" and "daughter" do not occur in the text, and the problem does not fit into this chapter. We have to make some awkward adjustments of meaning and of structure in order to fit "father" and "daughter" into the text.

If we refer this to a father and his daughter, we have the following jerky succession of subjects in verses 35, 37: He (a man who might marry) . . . he (a father) . . . she (his daughter) . . . he (the father) . . . they (his daughter plus a groom) . . . he (the father). Everything that is given in parentheses is missing in the text; even "she" is a guess of the commentators. For such a confusion of antecedents there is no guidance in the text. Greek writers are sometimes a little careless about antecedents, but they do not juggle them as it is done by this interpretation of the passage. However, as soon as we eliminate the father from these verses, they speak of the same subject in simple flowing language.

The father-daughter interpretation grants the father an absolute control over his daughter which may be in harmony with some custom in Corinth, but it does not fit Paul's kindly tone in this chapter, in Philemon, and elsewhere. And if Paul is supposed to be giving this advice to a slave, it should be remembered that slaves did not have such a right to dispose of their daughters.

The only possible reason for the father-daughter idea is found in the causative form of the verb γαμίζω (*textus receptus*: ἐνγαμίζω), which

is not found outside the New Testament and which everywhere else in the New Testament means "give in marriage." But it is not sound exegesis to change the simple meaning of verses 36, 37 because there is a verb in—*ἴζω* in verse 38. We should let the meaning of verses 36, 37 stand as it is and in its light inspect the unexpected verb form. Ordinarily when we have two forms like *γαμέω* and *γαμίζω*, the latter is causative. But *ὑστερέω* and *ὑστερίζω* mean the same; likewise *χομέω* and *χομίζω*. *Γνωρίζω* means "to make known" and "to know" (Phil. 1:21). A number of verbs in—*ἴζω* have no causative meaning. Radermacher (*Grammatik*, II:23) shows how verbs lost their transitive power. Verbs meaning the celebration of a festival, such as *παννυχίζω*, are intransitive; and so *γαμίζω*, the celebration of a wedding, may have lost its causative meaning. Good authorities (Bauer, Lietzmann, Blass-Debrunner, Moulton) are now agreed that *γαμίζω* here means "to marry."

In Deut. 25:3 ἀσχημονήσει refers to the brurality of inflicting more than forty blows on a Jew. But elsewhere in the Bible ἀσχήμων and ἀσχημοσύνη refer to the organs and activities of sex (LXX: Gen. 34:7; Leviticus 18, in the repeated phrase "uncover nakedness"; N. T.: 1 Cor. 12:23; Rev. 16:15); the ICC also says in regard to 1 Cor. 13:5 that love "does nothing that would raise a blush." Now it doesn't seem right to refer the behavior of ἀσχημονεῖν (v. 36) to a father who appears from nowhere. If a father were the subject, the word would mean some kind of incestuous behavior, which is improbable, since Paul would be speaking of a fine Christian father. The terms εὐσχημόν, "living nobly" (v. 35), ἀσχημονεῖν, "not acting properly," and ὑπέροχμος, "mature" (v. 36), must all refer to the same young man of a good character, who plans to marry but refuses to anticipate his marriage by any possible indecency. The fine points of the text are all for this interpretation. "Ο θέλει (v. 36) does not mean "as he pleases," referring to a father, but "what he wants," referring to the natural impulse of the young man to marry. *Γαμείτωσαν* can have only a young man and a woman as the subject.

The first natural impression which we get from the text is that it speaks of a man and a woman who are planning to marry. To describe the girl whom he has in mind, Paul could not say τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ or νύμφην (Rev. 21:9), because these terms mean a wife. (Νύμφη means daughter-in-law in Matt. 10:35; Luke 12:53.) He has in mind a woman who has been chosen, but is not yet married; the exact term for such a woman is παρθένος, which is used of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:27). This "virgin" is "his" (αὐτοῦ) girl, because he has

chosen her. (We have a mild equivalent of αὐτοῦ in the article ἦ in v. 28.) Paul is advising a man who has chosen a girl and who is now trying to decide whether he should marry or postpone marriage indefinitely. It is a decision of his mind (*καρδία*), the seat of his thought and will, rather than the heart with its emotions. The decision (*τοῦτο κέκρικεν*) might be "to keep his virgin intact" (*τηρεῖν τὴν ἐσωτὸν παρθένου*). The text in no way suggests a "spiritual" betrothal, which, at least among the Jews, was unknown. But it is only natural for men and women who have reached maturity to marry. (Plato stated that maturity, ἀκμή, was at the age of thirty for a man and at twenty for a woman; Loeb: Rep. V, p. 464 E.)

"His virgin" (*τὴν παρθένου αὐτοῦ*) may imply the mutual pledge to marry. Both may well agree not to carry out their pledge for some time but to stay like Joseph and Mary before Jesus was born (Matt. 1:25). The promise to marry would be a check that is not cashed immediately. Such a condition would not continue permanently but would end with the emergency (v. 26), during which also married people might not live normally (vv. 5, 29).

We may translate 1 Cor. 7:36-38 as follows: "If a man thinks he is not acting properly toward his girl, if he is mature and it must be so, let him do what he wants to do—he is not sinning—let them get married. But suppose a man feels no necessity but has a strong character and the will power, and he has made up his mind to keep his girl as she is, he will be doing right. If, then, he marries his girl, he is doing right; but if he does not marry her, he will be doing better."

St. Louis, Mo.

W. F. BECK