

Teach “The Book”

“America is raising a generation without sufficient knowledge of the world’s best-selling book, which limits their understanding of literature, art, music, history and culture.” National report, funded by the John Templeton Foundation. I believe this report is correct and I am very pleased to have recently become aware of a new textbook, [The Bible and Its Influence](#) that may serve as a tool to remedy this situation. This new textbook is written for use in public high schools in either an English or Social Studies elective course. I make this point because over the last several years we have all heard the comment that we need to put the Bible and prayer back in our public schools. This text appears to fulfill the First Amendment standard as agreed upon by such varied groups as the National Educators Association and the American Federation of Teachers, (teacher unions) and the National Association of Evangelicals and the American Jewish Congress. Public schools are obligated to avoid promoting religion, but if they ignore it completely they do a disservice to students, our communities and the Constitution.

This particular textbook has undergone a rigorous review by more than 40 scholars from such diverse institutions as University of California at Berkley, Gordon College, Yale Divinity School and Wheaton College. The scholar’s feedback has been incorporated into editing of the text. The book covers the cultural influences of the Bible with examples of art, literature, rhetoric and music. It presents facts academically, without prejudice to a particular view of canon and doctrine, preserving the ability of parents to teach their view of the Bible’s religious significance. A Teacher’s Edition of the Textbook is scheduled for release late this spring.

I am not a textbook salesman but I am concerned that according to a Gallup poll only 8% of public school teens reported access to a Bible elective course in their high school. I am particularly concerned when more than 60 percent of allusions in an Advanced Placement literature prep course are Biblical phrases and the works of Shakespeare which all high school students are required to study contain more than 1300 Biblical references. Talk about putting our students at a disadvantage when we have not offered most high school students access to a Bible elective course. Even the Wall Street Journal stated, “How are we to expect our young people to live up to America’s ideals if they are cut off from the stories, beliefs and metaphors that for hundreds of years gave those principles life?”

I urge parents, teachers, school administrators and members of school boards to take a serious look at this new textbook. It may be another important resource in preparing high school students for improving their academic performance and preparing them for life.