

TEACHING RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS POSTMODERN RELIGION EDUCATION COMING TO A SCHOOL NEAR YOU

by Allen Quist

It has now been several years since the U.S. Department of Education sent guidelines to all public schools in our country explaining that they could now teach about religion in their classes. This should not be surprising since the federal curriculum standards for civics, history and geography for more than a decade have been calling for teaching religion in public schools

What does it mean to teach religion, or to teach “about religion,” in public schools? Since the education establishment is totally committed to transformational education (changing the beliefs, attitudes and values of the child to match those of the radical left), teaching religion, or teaching “about religion” in public schools, really means indoctrinating children with postmodern religious beliefs. Success in such indoctrination requires that those children who come to school with Christian beliefs must also be cleansed of orthodox Christianity. .

A teaching religion in public schools seminar held this past July, 16-20, at Stockton, California, is a case in point. This seminar was dedicated to creating “master teachers” who would guide other teachers on why and how religion should be taught in public schools. (The seminar was funded by a grant from the U. S. Department of Education and was conducted by the California Three Rs Project.)

The purpose of the seminar was to argue that religion can and should be taught in public schools and to explain the preferred methods for doing so. The way to package this agenda, according to the speakers and information at the seminar, is to teach what it called “Religion in American History.”

The materials and speakers at the seminar made it abundantly clear that the curriculum was designed to mold the attitudes and values of the child about religion – not to genuinely teach “Religion in American history.” This purpose became evident by the promotion of a number of major themes (“doctrines” might be a better word). Several of the more significant doctrines were:

Theme #1. “The Reformation” never happened. Speakers at the seminar said it is inaccurate to speak of *the* Reformation because there have supposedly been numerous reformations, and continue to be numerous and ongoing reformations within the Christian church. Speaking of *the* reformation, therefore, said the speakers, is false.

In addition, speakers at the conference argued that one group’s “reformation” is another group’s “heresy.” So it’s all a matter of your group’s point of view (postmodernism). (Like all great heresies, the postmodern view is half-true; there are problems of bias and inaccuracies in written history. Postmodernists, however, take this observation to the extreme and say that real history is unknowable which leaves us with nothing but the perspectives of various groups. After destroying real history, this seminar then proceeded to promote its own view of religious history which has no interest whatsoever in being historically true, but is only interested in promoting the ideology, or perspective, of the presenters.

Speakers at the seminar spoke openly about the need to “deconstruct” and “reconstruct” American history including America’s religious history – to suit their own point of view, as mentioned above. That is, using this postmodern approach to historical research, real history disappears which frees the seminar’s speakers to construct (“invent” would be a more accurate term) any kind of history they desire. Historical facts and real history become irrelevant. Shaping the religion of the child (and the teachers) becomes the only concern.

Theme #2. The Lutheran Reformation [if there was one] consisted of *Sola Fide* (faith alone) and *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). The Lutheran Reformation was described by a speaker at the seminar by means of the following power-point slide:

- *Sola Scriptura*: individual interpretation vs. tradition and councils.
- Predestination: God knows who will receive grace of salvation.
- *Sola Fide*: Faith Alone
- *Purgatory*: Does not exist – no good works can influence God.
- Priesthood of All Believers; only two sacraments; individual approaches God.

In addition to numerous inaccuracies in this description of the Lutheran Reformation, notice also what is missing – what happened to Luther’s insistence on *Sola Gratia* (God’s grace alone)? And notice also the absence of any reference to *Sola Christus* (Jesus Christ alone). One has to wonder how a Lutheran reformation can be accurately described without any reference to Jesus the Christ or to God’s grace? An accurate description of the Lutheran Reformation would insist that its focal point is the doctrine that by means of Scripture alone we know we are saved because of God’s grace alone by means of faith alone in Jesus the Christ alone.

Facts and real history are not an issue for those committed to postmodern transformational education, however. To postmodernists history is simply one person’s perspective compared to that of another person. Postmodernists see themselves as being free to create whatever history they wish to meet their utilitarian goals of indoctrinating children with their own views.

Theme # 3. Christianity has had a horrendously negative impact on the world. The power-point presentation used at the seminar which includes the assault on the Protestant Reformation, also includes a long litany of wars that were supposedly caused by Christianity – followed by allegations of unending strife in the colonies supposedly caused by Christianity, then followed by a description of Christian missions in the new world which compares these missions to Nazi-style concentrations camps. Following is a power-point slide used at the seminar to describe what the Christian missions supposedly were like:

The Mission as Concentration Camp:

- Use of corporal, extreme and lethal punishment
- Punishments typically administered in public
- Any deviation from highly structured routine is quickly met with severe punishment

- Any demonstration of sub-standard Spanish or Latin, or the Christian Faith, is met with quick and severe punishment
- Men separated from women
- Children separated from adults
- Indians who attempt to run away are hunted down, captured, at times executed, though predominantly beaten and incarcerated
- Spanish is the primary language; Latin is secondary and utilized in Church
- Epidemic diseases proved to be the most significant factor in colonial efforts to overcome native resistance.

Notice that the description above uses the word “punishment” four times. The speaker defined “punishment” as follows:

Various punishments:

- Eyelids ripped off children who fell asleep in Mass.
- Vaginas sewn shut
- Castration
- Needles/nails run into body
- Needles into testicles
- Mouths sewn shut

Is this an accurate description of typical Christian missions in the new world? Obviously not. This kind of material is pure propaganda. Remember that truth is not an issue for those committed to postmodern transformational education. One participant said, “We are going to shed a very ugly light on Catholicism – and on Christianity as well ...” That of course is what this kind of historical revisionism is all about.

Theme # 4. The religions of the native peoples were highly beneficial to the lives of their followers and must be understood in terms of their common themes: These pagan religions were described in glowing terms and in what the seminar titled their “Overarching Indigenous Religions Similarities.” By reducing the “indigenous religions” to their similarities, the seminar was promoting the mystical theology of New Age/Pantheism guru, Joseph Campbell.

Campbell said that all religions are mere constructs of their culture, but the common themes of the world’s religions, he said, describe the real spiritual world. Following his lead, the seminar promoted the doctrine that true religion consists of the common themes of pagan religions; these themes are seen as being the correct religious doctrines for all people. In this way teaching “Religion in American History” is not only a denigration of Christianity, it is a promotion of New Age/Pantheism at the same time. (New Age/Pantheism is the application of postmodernism to religion.)

Totally absent in this seminar is any recognition of the overwhelmingly positive role that Christianity has played in United States and world history. Where, for example, did our nation’s concept of God-given inalienable rights to life, liberty and property come from? It came largely from the Christian church and its doctrines of natural law and creation.

And how about the guidelines Christians follow for the way we are to treat one another. (All genuine historians know we should go to the original documents to answer such questions.) What model did the Jesus the Christ himself provide for the way we should treat one another? Was it a Nazi-style concentration camp? Or was it the parable of the Good Samaritan? The answer, of course, is the Good Samaritan – but, once again, postmodernists do not bind themselves to the truth.

What we actually are facing, in the name of teaching “Religion in American History” in public schools, is a concerted attack on Christianity based on lies and distortions along with indoctrination into postmodern New Age/Pantheism (which just happens to be the religion of the Earth Charter and other UN related documents.) It’s coming to a school near you – if its not there already.

Are we ready to counter this carefully planned, and likely to be effective, attack on the faith and doctrinal understanding of our children?