

Religion Today
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A Biblical Education for America?
Paul V.M. Flesher

At its state convention earlier in June, the central committee of the Idaho Republican Party voted to encourage the Idaho Legislature to pass a bill permitting the use of the Christian Bible as a source of information for a long list of humanities, social science and science subjects in grades K-12.

While a number of scientists have reacted in horror or ridicule, not much has been discussed about the impact this might have on the social sciences or the humanities. Let's take a moment to consider what would be taught on a biblical basis.

Political Science: The only political system in Scripture is that of a king or an emperor. For Scripture, the only question is whether the king is native to the country or an outsider who conquered the country. In the case of the latter, Jesus did not counsel rebellion, but to "turn the other cheek," and to "pay unto Caesar what is Caesar's" (i.e., taxes) without complaint. The idea that a government could be democratic or that people should elect their rulers is antithetical to biblical ideas of governance.

Economics: The Bible clearly forbids the taking of interest when loaning money. Since interest-based financing is one of the driving forces of a capitalist economy, we would need to scrap the very economic system that has generated this country's wealth. No loaning on interest would also prevent borrowing money for a mortgage. To buy a home, you would have to save up the entire purchase price.

Human Rights/Slavery: Neither the New Testament nor the Old see anything wrong with slavery. Indeed, the apostle Paul counsels his enslaved readers that they should accept their slavery as God's will. This is not a race-based slavery, but one in which any one can become a slave, either through poverty or military defeat. There is even a temporary form of slavery for the poor. In debt? Can't pay your bills? Sell yourself (or your children) into slavery for seven years.

Human Rights/Women: A woman's place is in the home, not in the workplace. Women should not play any role in public society. They should not have a job outside the home, nor should they speak in church, let alone teach Sunday school or become ministers. Men would have to fill all the jobs that women now occupy. Children would stay home under their mothers' care; no more day care.

Since women would never function outside the home, there would be no need to educate them; the Bible never imagines they receive any formal education. In fact, the word "school" does not appear in Scripture with regard to either sex.

Human Rights/Sons: A son's duty is to obey and respect his father and mother. If he doesn't, he should be punished by death.

Clothing Styles: Cross-dressing is right out. Neither men nor women can wear clothing designed for the opposite sex. Only men can wear the pants in the family.

Worship: Religion, including its theology and beliefs, would be closely linked to the national government. Under the kings of Israel, there was one official religion. It was supported not only by a central priesthood, but also by the power of the king and his army. When Israel was controlled by foreign powers, that centralized religion became the expression of national identity, and rampant nationalism replaced government as the driving force of conformity. In this biblical America, then, there would be one religion (Episcopal? Catholic? Baptist? Mormon?). Freedom of religion would not exist.

So, what do you think? Should we make the Bible a textbook for primary education?