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Law 34 – Legal Research

12/19/15

The Removal of the Bible and Prayer by the Supreme Court

The moral and social deterioration in students attending public schools has increased since there is no longer a moral foundation to abide by. Ever since the United States Supreme Court decided to remove the Bible and prayer from public schools; there has been statistical evidence to prove the decline in educational studies and human morals.

When education was first introduced to America it was done with the expectation that children would be taught how to read by using the Bible, a moral foundation, and the importance of family values. One of the first known educational establishments was from the 1620's where Pilgrims, "taught their children the Bible and the Christian faith."¹ In 1624, the General Assembly of Virginia ruled that, "Indian Children be rounded up and educated in religion and civilization."² Following, in 1636, Harvard College was founded by a Presbyterian minister by the name John Harvard who would use that school as a, "religious school to train clergy in the Christian faith."³ The state of Massachusetts in 1642 passed a law known as, "Old Deluder Satan Law,"⁴ which assured children the right to read their Bibles. In Connecticut, a Law in 1690 was passed which allowed children to be taught how to read so that they could read their Bible.

Another major establishment was in 1690 when the, “First New England Primer⁵” was published. This Primer was released to a variety of schools in America and contained the teachings of the Alphabet by using Bible verses and it also contained; “children’s prayers, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Shorter Catechism and questions on the Bible by Mr. Cotton.⁶” Yale, in 1699 was founded by, “10 ministers in order to further the reformed Protestant religion.⁷” Other schools such as Princeton, Brown University, Queens College, and Dartmouth College between the years of 1746-1769 were also established with the a religious foundation.

From the beginning, schools were implemented with a religious purpose and reason. Our founding fathers established this nation with Christian principles because they knew the importance of having a foundation which relied on God and his morals. As Thomas Jefferson once said, “The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity.⁸” The early establishment of laws such as congress approving, “the purchase of Bibles to be used in all schools⁹” in 1781 and congress approving the Northwest Ordinance which directed people to establish schools, “to teach religion, morality and knowledge¹⁰” are great examples of how at one point the government saw the importance of having God in our schools. Fortunately, it didn’t stop there because George Washington addressed the importance of God during his farewell speech by encouraging America to fully learn the teachings of the Bible so that this country could remain moral and just.

Bibles at one point in our school history were actually a required book because in 1802 Thomas Jefferson required their use in classrooms. As well as Dr. Benjamin Rush who in 1830

wrote a letter supporting the use of the bible as a book in schools. Even to a later year of 1925, the state of Florida passed a law which required that daily bible readings take place in public schools. In 1946, the public schools in Dallas published a book that contained questions and answers about the life of Jesus Christ. This book was named "Bible Studies Course for New Testament."¹¹ To date, all school textbooks have had some type of Biblical references.

It wasn't until the latter years that the educational system started shifting. The first known case was that of *McCullum v. Board of Education*. This case was first brought to court by Vashti McCollum an atheist mother who had her son enrolled in a school where voluntary religious education classes were given. McCollum didn't agree with the religious classes and stated that her son was not accepted because he refused to attend them. After several tries and not being able to convince the school to stop these classes she decided to take her case to court. Mrs. McCollum stated these classes violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment as well as the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In her suit, McCollum asked "that the Board of Education be ordered to adopt and enforce rules and regulations prohibiting all instruction in and teaching of all religious education in all public schools in Champaign District Number 71, and in all public school houses and buildings in said district when occupied by public schools"¹². The Circuit court ruled in favor of the school district and upon appeal the Illinois Supreme Court affirmed the court's ruling. McCollum appealed this to the U.S. Supreme Court and it was there that court ruled in favor of McCollum stating that the school did indeed violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment¹³. It was then that it was determined that setting time aside in public school for prayer was unconstitutional.

The next known case that also caused a shift was *Engle V. Vitale*. The case was brought to the U.S. Supreme Court by a group of families who complained that the voluntary prayer written by the state board of regents to “Almighty God” contradicted their religious beliefs¹⁴. The families believed that by the school opening up with such a prayer violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment which in part read that, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” The court ruled that even though the students had the option to opt out of the prayer or leave the classroom still violated the constitution because it promoted a religion. Therefore, the government written prayer was not to be recited in public schools and was found in violation of the Constitution and the Establishment cause of the First Amendment¹⁵. The Engel case later became the source for other several cases. For instance, it was used in the *Wallace V. Jaffree* case which the Supreme Court ruled Alabama’s law permitting one-minute prayer for meditation was unconstitutional¹⁶. Another was *Lee V. Weisman* where the court didn’t allow a clergy to lead prayer at middle school graduations.¹⁷

Conversely, in 1963 another vital case came to pass. This case was known as *Abington Township School District V. Schempp* which banned the Lord’s prayer and bible reading in public schools¹⁸. The Abington Township School District would start their morning reciting 10 bible verses. The law didn’t specify what bible version could be used so the school opted for the Protestant King James Version. A father by the name of Edward L Schempp brought this case to court because he didn’t agree with the school reading the book of Leviticus which is found in the Bible. In Mr. Schempp’s own words he felt upset, “where they mention all sorts of blood sacrifices, uncleanness and leprosy. ... I do not want my children believing that God is a lesser person than a human father.¹⁹” The court was called upon this case to “consider the scope of

the provision of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution which declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"²⁰ Just like the previous cases, the court stated that this also violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

After the removal of the Bible and prayers from schools in 1963; America started to see a shift in all aspects of the students' lives. The fact that there was no longer the need to "fear" God or have a solid foundation as to what morals to rely upon; many students had a change of thinking, which in turn caused a change in their actions. There have been several research studies done by both religious and non-religious people which can show a correlation between the removal of God from schools and the decline of society's morals as well as education.

In the very own words of Greg Kouklo, although he personally doesn't believe, "there is a casual relationship between taking prayer out of school and all other bad things that happen in our society...there are some indisputable statistics that tell us that the downward slide in behavior started about the time of the court decision and was very evidently related. As we see it, the court ruling to remove prayer from the school system was nothing more than the 'official' stamp on the removal of God from a very crucial part of our society. It was simply one large step among many small ones, which has contributed to the moral & spiritual disintegration of the US."²¹ Kouklo also goes on to say that what the U.S. Supreme court did was eliminate the fear of God which in turn lead to an, "increase in crime venereal disease, premarital sex, illiteracy, suicide, drug use, public corruption, and other social ills."²²

As mentioned before, there were certain research studies that were done to show the correlation of such issues and Kouklo identifies one in specific that was done by David Barton. Mr. Barton's research identified the issues within young people, families, education and the nation. Prior to 1963, pregnancies for girls between the ages of 15-19 had been no more than 15 per thousand. However, after 1963 pregnancies increased 187 % in the next 15 years²³. For girls younger than 15, pregnancies have risen 553% since 1963²⁴. Sexually Transmitted Diseases among students were 400 per 100,00 and since 1963 they have gone up 226%²⁵.

In the area of families, prior to 1963, divorce rates had been declining and after 1963 divorces increased 300% each year for the next 15 years²⁶. In addition, the rate of unmarried people living together went up 353%, single parent families are up 140% and single parent families with children are up 160%. These are just a few of the alarming statistics that have come to light since the shift in our schooling system²⁷.

When it comes to education the impact has been just as great and severe. SAT scores prior to 1963 had been steady. After 1963, they rapidly declined for 18 consecutive years. One of the very notable statistics that was outlined was, that in "1974-75 the rate of decline of the SAT scores decreased, even though they continued to decline. That was when there was an explosion of private religious schools. There were only 1000 Christian schools in 1965. Between 1974 to 1984 they increased to 32,000. ²⁸" Aside from the scores declining, schools have also seen a great increase in school shootings. The numbers nearly doubled after 1963.

The impact and severity of removing God has also impacted our nation at large. As a nation, Violent crimes increased 544 %. Illegal drugs have become so out of control that the

problem is too huge for our nation to bare. In addition, our nation has been dispossessed of over 30 million citizens that have been aborted ²⁹.

It was then, after 1963 when the Bible and prayer were taken out of school that America started to see a decline in school education and moral values. It has become clear and evident that when this nation was first founded the intentions were to teach students the Bible and give them the liberty to pray and read the Bible during school hours. From the beginning, education was established to teach society how to live with morals. They were given the freedom of being taught how to read and write by using the Bible because the founding fathers found that necessary. Statistically, it has been proven that before 1963 our country was in a much better place as a whole and as individuals. Unfortunately, we have now seen the domino effect of the choices that our government has made.

In the cases mentioned above, all courts ruled that reading the Bible and saying a prayer during school was a violation of the Establishment cause of the First Amendment. However, I, like the judicial counsel from the case of Engle V. Vitale, “think that to deny the wish of these school children to join in reciting this prayer is to deny them the opportunity of sharing in the spiritual heritage of our Nation ³⁰.” If this very nation was established with Christian principles and for religious freedom, then shouldn’t Christians be allowed to practice what they believe? If a Christians belief is to do everything with great reverence to the Lord, then wouldn’t that apply to daily life? Daily lives of any believer consist of school, work, home, etc. Therefore, if we live in a country where we can practice freedom of religion then believers should have the right to

do so. Stripping away one's religious freedom to accommodate another's is still a violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendment.

"Of the first 108 colleges and universities founded in America, 106 were founded as Christian schools. Of the first 126 colleges, 123 were Christian.³¹" As a sign of respect and honor to our founding fathers; I truly believe that bringing back the true origins of our schooling system would help shape this country back to its original intent.

¹ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

² School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

³ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

⁴ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

⁵ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

⁶ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

⁷ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

⁸ Faith of Our Fathers. (2002-2015). Retrieved from <http://faithofourfathers.net/>. See John Adams.

⁹ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

¹⁰ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

¹¹ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. See [History of Schools in America](#)

¹² *McCullum v. Board of Education*, [333 U.S. 203](#) (1948)

¹³ *McCullum v. Board of Education*, [333 U.S. 203](#) (1948)

¹⁴ *Engel V. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)

¹⁵ *Engel V. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962)

¹⁶ *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 US 38 - Supreme Court 1985

¹⁷ Lee v. Weisman, 505 US 577 - Supreme Court 1992

¹⁸ *Abington School Dist. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963)

¹⁹ *Abington School Dist. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963)

²⁰ *Abington School Dist. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963)

²¹ Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

²² Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

²³ Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

²⁴ Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

²⁵ Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

²⁶ Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

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²⁸ Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

²⁹ Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

³⁰ Prayer in Schools. Retrieved from http://www.inplainsite.org/what_happened_when_the_praying.html

³¹ School Prayer in America. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.schoolprayerinamerica.info/>. *See History of Schools in America*