

How not to teach Islam in a Maryland high school

by Hugh Fitzgerald



In Maryland, several years ago, a high school teacher taught her students about Islam. Not all agreed with what, or how, she taught. One student's family sued. The case is wending its way to the Supreme Court, where it will undoubtedly be heard.

According to [CBN News](#):

Four years ago, a Christian high school junior was compelled by her teacher at La Plata High School in La Plata, Md., to recall the Islamic conversion creed – the Shahada – as part of a written assignment. She was required to write the Islamic conversion creed, "There is no god but Allah, and

Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."

Comment:

It is one thing to tell students in a unit on Islam what the Shahada says, and to explain that mere recital of the Shahada is enough for someone to be converted to Islam. But by requiring her students to write out the Shahada, the teacher is confusing them: have they, the students may wonder, in some sense "converted to Islam"? What is the effect on young and impressionable students, of being required to write out this conversion creed? Do they think: "Well, that wasn't so bad. It was kinda fun. Jeez, I could be a Muslim right now, if I wanted." Are they being inveigled into somehow assenting to its content, or will they take the task as simple role-playing, make-believe which no one could possibly object to?

The World History course also taught that 'Most Muslims' faith is stronger than the average Christian's.

This statement is unacceptable on two grounds. First, this is not a fact but an opinion— that the faith of Muslims is "stronger" – offered by a public school teacher to her credulous students. This is a remark that clearly favors one religion, Islam, over another, Christianity, and thus violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Had that teacher said that "the faith of Christians is stronger than that of Muslims" we can be certain that CAIR, the ACLU, and the Southern Poverty Law Center would have come down on that teacher, and the school system, like a ton of bricks.

A second objection to that remark about the greater strength of Muslims' faith, is that no evidence is presented as to its truth. How could the teacher conceivably claim that the faith

of most Muslims is “stronger” than that of the average Christian? How can this possibly be measured? Clearly, the students in La Plata are meant to admire the religion that, they are told, commands the stronger faith. There are two billion Christians and 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. How was this factoid about the comparative strength of belief arrived at? Is a Muslim willing to die as a “martyr” while engaged in Jihad evidence of an admirably stronger faith, or of a terrifyingly twisted one? If the teacher relied on a poll for this assertion, what kind of questions were asked to ascertain the “strength” of a faith? Does a Muslim who says his five daily prayers “stronger” in his faith than the Christian who regularly attends church on Sundays? Both are fulfilling their respective duties. Is a Muslim “stronger” in his faith if he is willing to kill and to be killed for it? Perhaps what Muslims are here being praised for – this greater “strength” of their faith – is reason, rather, to deplore and fear them. Or are such value judgments about religions simply impermissible?

What if that statement about the “strength” of belief were rephrased for accuracy: “Many Muslims have a fanatical faith that Christians can only marvel and shudder at, and that has led some, as we know, to commit acts of violent Jihad, including suicide bombings, that testify to the strength of their faith.” It is impossible to imagine that a public school teacher would ever dare to utter such a statement, however accurate it may be.

Caleigh Wood [the girl whose family is suing] refused to complete the assignment, [writing out the Shahada], believing that it is a sin to profess by word or in writing, that there is any other god except the Christian God.

School officials refused to let her opt out of the course and as a result, she received a lower percentage grade for the course, but that did not affect her[overall?] letter grade.

School officials ought to have punished not the pupil, Caleigh Wood, but the teacher, as well as anyone higher up in the school system who may have had a hand in creating the classroom content on Islam. They need a refresher course in the meaning, and application, of the Establishment Clause. As public school employees, they are not allowed to favor one religion over another. Or do they not realize that they have been favoring Islam?

The Thomas More Law Center (TMLC) on behalf of the Wood family filed a lawsuit, claiming the school had violated the First Amendment Establishment Clause and the girl's right not to be forced to profess faith in another religion. Both the Federal District Court and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the high school's Islamic curriculum.

Now, the TMLC has appealed the case to the Supreme Court, asking the high court to decide whether any legal basis exists to allow public schools to discriminate against Christianity while at the same time promoting Islam.

Comment:

It's hard to believe that both the Federal District Court and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the school. Fortunately, an appeal to the Supreme Court will be made and there, given its current makeup, it is almost certain that the appeal by the Thomas More Law Center, claiming that the behavior of school authorities violated the Establishment Clause, will prevail.

Under the guise of teaching history or social studies, public

schools across America are promoting the religion of Islam in ways that would never be tolerated for Christianity or any other religion,” TMLC President and Chief Counsel Richard Thompson said in a statement. “I’m not aware of any school which has forced a Muslim student to write the Lord’s Prayer or John 3:16: ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’

That is an unanswerable objection.

Students in high school at La Plata, Maryland were forced to write out Islam’s Profession of Faith, the Shahada. They were also instructed that the faith of Muslims is “stronger” than that of the average Christian.” But that is not all – though that is more than enough to trigger a lawsuit by the Thomas More Law Center – that the high school students had to endure.

Using a Powerpoint presentation in the class, the students at the school were also taught:

“Islam is a peaceful religion.”

Comment:

Islam is not a “peaceful religion.” It began in war, with Muhammad fighting in dozens of military campaigns to subdue non-Muslims in the Arabian peninsula. It continued to spread through war, ie. violent Jihad, throughout the Middle East and North Africa during the first century of its existence. War

has been the primary means for the spread of Islam over its entire 1,400 history. There has never been a time when, somewhere in the world, Jihad has not been waged. Islam is “peaceful” only once it has conquered a land, and subjugated its inhabitants. These inhabitants who are then offered—if they are “People of the Book” (Christians and Jews), or are treated like them (as ultimately happened to both Zoroastrians and Hindus)—the three options of: death, conversion to Islam, or permanent status as tolerated dhimmis. Those dhimmis may remain alive, and practice their own religion, as long as they fulfill a series of onerous conditions, the most important of which was payment of the Jizyah, a burdensome tax paid by non-Muslims to the Muslim state, so as to be “protected” from the Muslims themselves. In this Introduction to Islam for high-schoolers in La Plata, apparently neither the dhimmi, nor the Jizyah, was discussed.

“Jihad is a “personal struggle in devotion to Islam, especially involving spiritual discipline.”

The primary meaning of Jihad is not that of a “personal struggle,” though this is a favorite claim of Muslim apologists, who are fond of quoting a single weak Hadith, not found in any of the most reliable Hadith collections, in which Muhammad, returning home from a military campaign, says that he is returning from the Lesser Jihad (of war) to the Greater Jihad of domestic life, requiring the spiritual discipline that everyday existence demands. Against that single Hadith, there are 109 Qur’anic verses that command Muslims to wage violent Jihad – Holy War – against the Infidels. Did the teacher not think to look into any of those Qur’anic verses about that kind of Jihad – e.g., 2:191-193; 3:151, 8:12, 8:60, 9:5, 9:29, 47:4? Does the teacher really think that when the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Al-Nusra Front, Al-

Shebaab, Boko Haram, and many similar Muslim groups, all declare they are waging Jihad, that what they have in mind is a “personal struggle...involving spiritual discipline’?

“To Muslims, Allah is the same God that is worshiped in Christianity and Judaism.”

This is a mendacious attempt to make Allah seem familiar and acceptable to Christians and Jews; the word itself, we are supposed to believe, is simply another name for the “same God.” But Allah is very different from the God of the Christians or Yahweh of the Jews. Among the differences are these, taken from a Christian website:

In Christianity,

God’s only begotten Son is Jesus. Allah has no begotten son.

God made salvation available by sacrificing His Son and promises salvation by grace to those who believe. Allah sacrificed nothing, and only saves if sufficient works are done.

God has a payment for sins—Jesus Christ. Allah has no payment for sins.

God’s Christ paid for the sins of mankind. Allah paid for nothing, and all men pay for their own sins.

God's salvation is through Christ's work. Allah's salvation is through people's works.

God's saving work is, "Come to Christ." The major part of Moslem salvation is to believe Mohammed was the sum and seal of the prophets.

God's book is very different from Allah's book. They contradict each other, so they cannot both be true. For example, the Bible says Christ was resurrected from the dead. The Moslems reject that as a lie.

God says his Son is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Allah says Christ is "only a messenger."

God treats men and women equally. Allah does not.

God says marriages today (Christian) are to be monogamous. Allah allows more than one wife.

There is no marriage in God's Paradise. Faithful men get many virgins in Allah's paradise..

"Men are the managers of the affairs of women" and "Righteous women are therefore obedient."

Comment:

This last remark – about men as managers of the affairs of women –is one of the very few remarks mentioned in the high school classes about Islam that accurately conveys what the Qur'an teaches. See Qur'an 4:34, where men are described as managing the affairs of women. And note that the lesson includes the remark that "righteous women are therefore obedient" but no mention is made that there is a corollary to this statement, to be found in Qur'an 4:34: a Muslim husband is in that verse given the right to "beat" his wife (or wives), if he merely suspects her of disobedience. That, of course, was not mentioned in the unit on Islam at La Plata high school.

Furthermore, the reason men are "managers" of the affairs of women is explained by Muhammad in a Hadith where he describes "the deficiency of their [women's] intelligence." This Hadith was not mentioned by the high school teacher; apparently the students were simply meant to memorize that Islamic teaching – about men being the managers of women –without being provided with the textual justification from Muhmmd. His reason – the "deficiency of their [women's] intelligence" –would be too offensive for the students, and has thus been deliberately left unsaid.

"Many public schools have become a hotbed of Islamic propaganda," Thompson [President of the Thomas More Law Center] continued.

"Teaching Islam in schools has gone far beyond a basic history lesson. Prompted by zealous Islamic activism and emboldened by confusing court decisions, schools are now

bending over backward to promote Islam while at the same time denigrate [sic] Christianity.”

“We are asking the Supreme Court to provide the necessary legal guidance to resolve the insidious discrimination against Christians in our public schools,” he concluded.

Despite two rulings against it in lower courts, the Thomas More Law Center should prevail when the case comes before the Supreme Court. The public schools in La Plata, Maryland have favored Islam in such a blatant way, clearly violating the Establishment Clause. It is one thing to tell students that conversion to Islam requires only that one recite the Profession of Faith, without knowing anything else about Islam, and then passing out a sheet so that they can read the Shahada for themselves. Muslims were so eager to make converts, to swell their numbers, that they didn't care what converts knew at the time. That is permissible. But it is quite another thing to force students to write out the Shahada themselves, which is a way of propagandizing for the faith, no doubt leading some of them to think, excitedly, “Gosh, now I really could be a Muslim.” The President and Chief Counsel of the Thomas More Law Center, Richard Thompson, said in a statement. “I'm not aware of any school which has forced a Muslim student to write the Lord's Prayer or John 3:16: ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”

Thompson's point is devastating and unanswerable. The public schools should not be promoting Islam by asking students to write out the Shahada. And they should also not be favoring Islam over all other faiths by disseminating misinformation – propaganda – about Islam. When the public school teachers and

administrators in La Plata, Maryland teach students that "Islam is a peaceful religion," they are ignoring 1,400 years of violent jihad. When the teachers instruct their students that "Jihad is a personal struggle...involving personal discipline" they are ignoring the 109 Qur'an verses commanding violent Jihad, and relying on a single weak Hadith. When the students are told that there is no difference between the Muslim Allah and the Christian God, they are being asked to ignore the Christian belief, ferociously rejected by Muslims, that Christ is the Son of God. They are also being asked to overlook the violence and ferocity rightly associated with Allah in the Qur'an, so different from the Christian God's message of peace, love, and compassion.

There may be a way to teach American students about Islam. But if the reality of Islam is to be accurately conveyed, it is hard to see what, beyond the Five Pillars, can be truthfully taught. without considerable trouble. In today's supercharged political atmosphere, CAIR and other Muslims will be watching to see if there is anything they deem untoward – that is, negative – being taught about Islam. They will try to insist that teachers offer the sanitized version of Islam that CAIR has been so adept at spreading. They will be quick to cry "Islamophobia" and "racism" if there is any deviation from the version of Islam they wish to have presented. And even if there are suits by the Thomas More Law Center that ultimately prevail, the time and expense spent on fighting CAIR over this or that program on Islam may make many schools not eager to teach about Islam at all. And if Islam is not to be taught, then other religions cannot be either, lest the schools run afoul of the Establishment Clause. Perhaps, since there seems little prospect of being allowed to teach the truth about Islam in our schools, it would be best to leave the subject out of the curriculum altogether. The study of comparative religion can be taken up at a later date, at the university level. It is harder for the CAIRS of this world to intimidate those college professors whose work focuses on Islam (but are

neither Muslims nor cheerleaders for the faith), and who are more likely to stand their ground, than it is for them to frighten public high school teachers and administrators, who likely do not know enough about Islam to defend themselves from those devastating charges of “Islamophobia” and “racism.”

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