

## **Teaching the Bible as Literature in Public Schools: A Practical Lesson in Theoretics**

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Integration of the Bible within public school curricula is often fraught with complications. Decisions ranging from which courses should employ the Bible, to what Bible is selected, to is its presence even legal, force many public school educators to restrict even minimal aspects of Biblical instruction from entering their curricula.

Roger Baker<sup>1</sup> and The First Amendment Center, of Vanderbilt University, counter the inhibitors with a constitutionally kosher formula that procures the Bible's admittance within public school classrooms. By presenting the Bible with a secular purpose, which neither promotes nor inhibits religion and avoids religious entanglements, courses like Bible as Literature can be legally offered in the public schools.

Despite this legal concoction, a Bible as Literature course presupposes that the Bible should be taught as literature. Baker supports this method of literary instruction when writing, "[The Bible] is imaginative literature that can be used to teach the characteristics of good literature in our schools and to provide literary examples that will help students to understand secular literature."<sup>2</sup>

However, do the Bible's literary merits outweigh the ensuing legal balancing act? Is it even possible to practically implement Baker and the Center's legal strategy? Instead of tiptoeing on the frozen lake of constitutional regulations, why not designate college as the appropriate environment for Bible as Literature courses?

This paper explores the educational benefits of utilizing the Bible as literature, reviews its constitutionality, and ultimately concludes that Bible as Literature courses are better left outside the public school classroom.

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Baker is an Associate Professor of English at Brigham Young University.

<sup>2</sup> See, Baker, Roger. *Teaching the Bible as Literature*. Massachusetts, Christopher Gordon Publishers, Inc., 2002.