This article was downloaded by: [University of Cambridge]

On: 10 December 2014, At: 03:56

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/urea20>

THE NORTH DAKOTA PLAN OF HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY

Vernon P. Squires^a

^a Professor of English, University of North Dakota

Published online: 10 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: Vernon P. Squires (1913) THE NORTH DAKOTA PLAN OF HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY, Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association, 8:2, 225-231, DOI: [10.1080/0034408130080213](https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408130080213)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408130080213>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

THE NORTH DAKOTA PLAN OF HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY

VERNON P. SQUIRES,
Professor of English, University of North Dakota.

The North Dakota plan is simply this: The State High School Board, which has general supervision over the high school work of the state, has authorized a Syllabus of Bible Study, just as it has authorized Syllabi in other branches of study, showing the general nature and scope of the work to be covered. Upon the basis of this Syllabus an examination is given at the time of the regular State examinations. These examination papers, like those in other subjects, are marked by skilled readers appointed by the board, and to the successful examinees credit is assigned to the extent of a half-unit out of the sixteen ordinarily required for high school graduation. The Bible work differs, however, from the work in other subjects in one essential respect. The study is not pursued in the school-house or during school hours. It is carried on privately or in special outside classes, usually in connection with the various Sunday Schools or Young People's Societies. These classes are taught by the local pastor or priest or by some layman interested. The study, however, is not required of any individual or of any school; it is purely elective. The examination is confined to literary and historical questions. Individual preceptors are, of course, at liberty to combine with the literary and historical instruction as much of the purely religious as they may see fit; but what the State recognizes and gives credit for is not the religious but the purely intellectual aspects of the subject. In other words, the State recognizes the literary and historical study of the Bible as worthy of academic credit; but it does not presume to give the instruction. Recognizing our national policy of the separation of Church and State, it puts upon the Church the responsibility for the instruction; but gives suitable recognition to work well done. We in North Dakota feel that the plan is sound in theory, and the brief experience we have had with it justifies our faith in it as a practical means of getting boys and girls of high school age interested in the careful study of the Book of Books.

Perhaps a history of the genesis and growth of the idea in our State may afford a means of clearer understanding of its various details.

At the annual meeting of our State Educational Association held in Fargo in November, 1911, one of the topics of discussion was "The Bible in the Public Schools." I went to this meeting eager to speak on the subject, but very doubtful as to what it were best to say. I had become thoroughly impressed with the idea that there is among the young people of today a woeful lack of information as to Scriptural history and biography and, if possible, a still more marked failure to appreciate the charm of Biblical style and phrase. That fact had been driven home to me time and time again as I sought to interpret to college men and women the masterpieces of English literature; it had been recently impressed upon me afresh by a simple examination which I had given to our freshman class. The questions used at that time and an analysis of the answers given were published in the *Journal of Education* for January 25, 1912. Suffice it to say that the test consisted of a few simple questions which any intelligent person should certainly have been able to answer without a moment's hesitation. Yet of the class of 139—all high school graduates—only twelve or 8.5 per cent "passed," the average standing of the entire group being about forty per cent.

On the night before the proposed discussion, as by a sudden inspiration, there flashed into my mind this idea: Why not dignify and standardize the work of the Sunday school by giving it academic credit, thus introducing into the Sunday school some of the discipline of the day school and giving to Bible study just recognition as a subject worthy of scholarly effort? In this matter why should not State and Church work together, the Church doing the teaching with as much attendant religious instruction as it sees fit; and the State indicating the ground to be covered and giving due credit to work satisfactorily mastered?

The next day the plan was proposed and met with instant and apparently unanimous approval. A committee was at once appointed to perfect the scheme and prepare a Syllabus, and if possible to secure its adoption. This committee, of which I had the honor to be the chairman, consisted, besides myself, of one experienced Normal school man, Professor A. P. Hollis of Valley City, one city superintendent, Superintendent Frank-

lin Thordarson of Mayville, and one High school teacher, Miss M. Helen Davies of Grand Forks. We represented four different denominations, and were all Sunday school teachers as well as teachers by profession. We began our work by laying down certain fundamental principles, which might be formulated as follows:

First. Religious instruction, as such, must not enter into the Syllabus or the examination. Important as religious instruction is, we must not violate our fundamental American idea of the separation of Church and State. The justification of Bible study, so far as the schools are concerned, is found in the great value of a knowledge of Scriptural history and literature as broadly cultural subjects. This idea must be constantly and consistently borne in mind and strenuously insisted on.

Second. Every suspicion of sectarianism or of anything suggesting it must be avoided. Accordingly no text-book except the Bible itself shall be prescribed. Of this any version may be used. The Catholic may use the Douay version; the Protestant the King James or the Revised Version, as desired. The desirability of consulting Bible Dictionaries and standard historians and commentators will be urged; but individual teachers must select their helps for themselves.

Third. All suspicions of partisanship must be carefully avoided. There must therefore be no insistence on any theory of authorship or any system of chronology. "Higher critics," and "conservatives" shall have full opportunity to present their special views to their classes. In the examination any recognized system of chronology will be accepted, and no such disputed question as "Who wrote the Pentateuch?" will ever be asked.

Fourth. The work in both Old and New Testaments must be preceded by a careful study of Biblical geography, and the whole study must be as concrete and objective as possible.

Fifth. Attention must be called to the beauty of Biblical style by an insistence on the learning of a number of memory-passages, in the choice of which, however, there shall be considerable latitude.

Sixth. The work as a whole must amount to enough to occupy ninety hours of recitation besides the time for preparation, this being the amount of work usually required in order to secure a half-credit in the high schools of our State.

With these principles in view our Syllabus was prepared. It is divided into an introduction and nine sections as follows:

1. Studies in Old Testament Geography. In this part, unmistakable facts about the topography of Palestine and adjacent regions are briefly set forth, and the student is directed to the map to be found in most Bibles with instructions to locate various important places which are named.
2. The Great Old Testament Narratives. This includes the enumeration of fifty famous Old Testament stories, and requires the reading and study of about one hundred and fifty chapters, mainly in the historical books of the Old Testament.
3. A brief Outline of Hebrew History in four great periods, with the suggestion that the student should consult some Bible Dictionary or Hebrew History for exact dates.
4. The list of the Old Testament books for memorizing.
5. Ten memory passages from which the student is to select at least five to be learned.
6. Studies in the life of Christ, beginning with a lesson on the political divisions of Palestine in Christ's time, the study of the life itself being based on the gospel of Luke. The reading required is this entire book and certain passages in the other gospels.
7. Studies in the history of the Early Church. This involves the reading of the entire book of Acts with special emphasis, including map drills, on the missionary journeys of Paul.
8. The Books of the New Testament.
9. Memory passages from the New Testament.

This Syllabus having been duly prepared was presented to the high school principals and city superintendents who, as is their custom, assembled at the University in May, 1912, for their annual conference. It received the cordial and unanimous approval of this conference. In fact, this was the only matter presented to the meeting which was carried by a unanimous vote. Backed thus by the Educational Association and more specifically by the high school leaders of our State, the Committee laid the matter before the High School Board last June. Lest there might be an objection to printing the Syllabus at public expense, the Committee, being privately assured of support, said to the Board that the matter would be taken care of without cost to the State. After due consideration the plan was unanimously endorsed by the Board and publicly announced. The State Sunday School Association expressed a desire to print the Syllabus and to push the plan. This generous offer was accepted. The Syllabi were distributed to all inquirers, and with the opening of the high schools last fall many classes were organized in our various cities and towns.

It is of course too early to give a definite report on the work. At the time of the mid-year examinations in January, there were a great many calls for the Bible examination, these calls in many instances no doubt being prompted by curiosity. As those present might also be interested in knowing what sort of questions were asked, I present them to you. They were as follows:

BIBLICAL HISTORY AND LITERATURE.
(One-half unit credit.)

(Answer any ten questions. Time, 180 minutes.)

1. Draw an outline map of Palestine, locating Mt. Carmel, Mt. Pisgah, the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan, the Kishon, Beersheba, Bethlehem, Dan, Jericho, Jerusalem, Samaria.
2. Briefly state what the following names suggest: Cain, Cana, Canaan, Esther, Esdraelon, Goliath, Jeroboam, Josiah, Nehemiah, Sharon.
3. Briefly narrate the chief events connected with the Exodus from Egypt.
4. Briefly tell the story of Ruth.
5. Describe the "Call of Isaiah."
6. Briefly recapitulate the chief events of the last week of Christ's earthly life.
7. Briefly recapitulate the chief events of Paul's second missionary journey.
8. Briefly recapitulate the chief events that occurred during Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea.
9. Name twenty (20) books of the Old Testament, grouping them under proper heads, as historical, poetical, etc.
10. Name twenty (20) books of the New Testament, properly grouping them.
11. Write a memory passage from the Psalms. (One complete Psalm.)
12. Write a memory passage from the New Testament. (At least 150 words.)

Examination of the
State High School Board of North Dakota,
January 13, 1913.

I submit that this is a fairly difficult examination and that the high school boy or girl who can pass it is entitled to a modicum of academic credit. As to how many attempted the January examination no statement can be made. It is not probable that many did so, as the time that has elapsed since the course was announced has not yet been sufficient to complete the work in a satisfactory way. Fourteen papers were, however, sent in to the State Examiner. These papers came from six different schools. All had been graded by the local

instructor as above the passing mark. Of the fourteen, however, three papers were rejected by the official reader as not coming up to the standard. The other eleven were satisfactory.

As to the success of the plan, Mr. Walter A. Snow, the efficient secretary of our State Sunday School Association, who spends his entire time in the field, writes as follows:

"As General Secretary of the North Dakota Sunday School Association which published the Syllabus for High School Bible Study which you prepared, I want to express my very keen appreciation of the benefit which has come to our young people through the introduction of this course of study. As I have travelled over the State I have found large numbers of these classes, all of them doing good work, and a splendid interest is manifested on the part of the young people. Through correspondence I also hear of many other classes.

"It seems to me that this course has done more to arouse interest in Bible study on the part of our High school young folks than any other thing which has ever been presented to them. My judgment is that this course is destined to become a large factor in the religious training of our young people.

"Many of these classes meet at the Sunday school hour; others meet at the hour of the Young People's Society, taking the place of the regular session of the society, but always the pastor or some other strong leader is teacher of the class and the group is intimately related with the life of the church. Nor is this movement limited to the Protestants. I have discovered at least one class taught by a Catholic priest.

"Inquiries have reached this office from twenty different states, from New York to Texas and from Washington to Cuba, manifesting a wide interest which your plan has aroused in the minds of people throughout the country. A second edition of 5,000 copies of the Syllabus is just received here at our office which I hope will supply the demand for a time.

"You will be glad to know that the Committee on Education of the International S. S. Association has endorsed this course as filling the requirements of the Bible Study section of either the First Standard Teacher Training course, or the Advanced Teacher Training course."

In conclusion, I would say again, as I did at the beginning, that we in North Dakota feel convinced that we have hit upon a workable plan. It utilizes existing agencies by furnishing a new impulse and a new ideal. It brings about a friendly co-

operation between church and school without interfering in any way with the function of either or causing any "entangling alliance." It allows perfect freedom of religious instruction, and holds the boys and girls in the Sunday school or the special classes, where it can be given. It affords cultural training in our most significant classic. In short, it exalts the Bible as the greatest of books and furnishes a motive for its study under suitable direction. Not one word of adverse criticism has come to me during the six months during which the plan has been in active operation, and our State High School Inspector and Mr. Snow have both recently assured me that no adverse criticism has come to them.

One thing, at least, is sure—there are hundreds of high school boys and girls in North Dakota today who are studying the Bible as they never studied it before. To us who are interested in the work no reason is apparent why the plan should not be generally adopted in other states.

SUNDAY SCHOOL STANDARDS.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF ADVANCE IDEALS IN THE TEN-POINT PLAN.

Some Sunday-school "Standards" seem to be designed by establishing the minimum requirements and inviting all to rally to these. A standard should be set before, should establish practical ideals and should tend to move all forward, rather than to retard progressive schools to the pace of the indolent and ignorant. The following standards illustrate the better ideal:

THE DES MOINES STANDARD.

(Prepared by Walter S. Athearn, Director of Des Moines Sunday School Institute.)

I. RELATION TO THE CHURCH.

1. The Church Board, Vestry or Session as the case may be, shall sustain a standing committee of Religious Education which shall have general charge of the school.
2. The Church must assume entire financial responsibility for the Sunday school. All bills for the Sunday school shall be paid out of the church treasury, and all collections from the Sunday school shall be turned into the church treasury.