

PREFACE

ONE MIGHT EXPECT THERE TO BE A VAST SCHOLARLY LITERATURE that deals with the role of religion in the public school curriculum. After all, the public square is often filled with smoke from battles over religion and schooling; our subject would appear to be both timely and important. And yet, with only a very few exceptions, scholars and schools of education have ignored our subject. So it should not be surprising that the proper role of religion in the K–12 curriculum is poorly understood, and the importance of what is at stake is not sufficiently appreciated, among educators.

We will argue that public education is deeply flawed by its failure to take religion seriously, and we will argue on what we regard as powerful civic, constitutional, and educational grounds that the study of religion must be much more fully integrated into the curriculum than is now the case.

We have written a short book—given the complexity of our subject and the controversy surrounding it—and many of our issues require a longer and more sophisticated discussion than we can provide here. Indeed, we have addressed many of these issues more fully in other contexts and refer our unconvinced readers to those sources. Warren A. Nord's *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (1995) is a comprehensive study of the role of religion in education (historically, philosophically, constitutionally, and pedagogically) that provides context for, and elaboration on, many of the claims and arguments we make here. *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education*, written by Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas (1994, 1996), includes a wealth of documents and commentary dealing with the civic and constitutional dimensions of our argument. Haynes's *Religion in American History: What to Teach and How* (1990) further develops our argument in Chapter 4, and provides primary source material that will be of considerable help to history teachers.

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