

DUKE UNIVERSITY

“MERE EXPOSURE,” “TOLERANCE,” AND “ESTABLISHMENT”:
THE POLITICS OF RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A SENIOR HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
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PREFACE

This project is the result of both a personal interest in Christianity and an education focused on contemporary political theory. I have always been interested in the tension that arises when professing Christians enter the public arena. Not only is a public backlash imminent when this happens, but Christians will tend to make claims that amount to something regarding religious oppression. This oppression never fails to get tied into something spiritual, with a classic “good versus evil,” or “God versus Satan,” motif being invoked. Is the liberal state really as bad as the Prince of Darkness himself, or have we, as a liberal society, seriously misapprehended something very important about what the liberal state is supposed to be and how it is supposed to act? I came across *Mozert v. Hawkins* while reading Prof. Stolzenberg’s exposition of the case in the *Harvard Law Review*. I was intrigued, and I still am intrigued, by how amazingly perfect the case is a real-life example of political theory in action. Further, I saw a good opportunity to evaluate particular norms of political theory with regard to education, and to apply any solutions I might achieve to the case. Whatever the result, it has been an invaluable experience as a personal goal and as a thinking exercise.

My research focused on mainly three theorists: Stephen Macedo, Amy Gutmann, and William Galston; they are all brilliant and accessible thinkers and writers. I also found myself searching other works upon recommendation for the sake of breadth of viewpoint. Despite the mass of reading I accomplished, I feel like one could read and write about this topic until the life of the earth comes to a close.

Again, I wish to thank all that contributed to my thinking and research, and all who offered suggestions and comments. I hope the reader views what follows as not only interesting reading but also as a work that required unparalleled thought and soul-searching on the part of the author. I am happy to report that I enjoyed writing the work and that I have found that I have a personal stake in the consequences of education in the liberal state. What is more, I think that we all, as citizens of a liberal regime, share this stake together.