

sequently affirmed by a refusal to review, held that the school authorities acted legally in banning classroom prayers as a violation of the First Amendment.

This series of rulings by the Supreme Court has gone hand-in-hand with other rulings involving a reference to Deity in our public affairs. A case which went to the Supreme Court from the State of Maryland held that a belief in God could not be required of a notary public.

Very recently, and following decisions of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals of Maryland invalidated a conviction in the Criminal Court of Cecil County because all prospective jurors were required to attest to a belief in God. The person convicted, a Buddhist, complained on appeal that his conviction thereby was unlawful, and the Court of Appeals upheld the contention.

In early January 1966, the Circuit Court for Baltimore County granted a motion for a new trial for a man who three times previously has been sentenced to life imprisonment for the slaying of a woman in the month of June 1962. The victim of this convicted murderer was slain in a Pulaski Highway motel. Three days later, the man convicted surrendered to Baltimore City police and told police where the body of the victim could be found.

This convicted murderer now has noted a further appeal on the ground that jurors who participated in his conviction had been required to express a belief in God as a condition for their becoming jurors.

The reasoning in these and other similar cases stems back to a complete misinterpretation and misapplication of the provisions of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

The First Amendment was included in the group of the first ten amendments, ever since known and referred to as the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights was not in the original Constitution as adopted by the Philadelphia Convention and as ratified by the states before the United States of America could begin its formal operations under that Constitution. The Bill of Rights was meant to allay the fears of those persons who desired safeguards for private rights against the possible oppression and tyranny of the new national government.

It was in accordance with the historical origin of the principles contained in the Bill of Rights, with the obvious language of the Bill of Rights, and with the completely clear intention of the people of this country that all Articles in the Bill of Rights were meant to limit the Federal Government and not in any way to apply to the states. They were meant to limit the legislative power of the Congress but not of the state legislatures. It is true, of course, that there are many examples of similar provisions in the several states' constitutions, but the principle is very clear that the Bill of Rights appended to the Federal Constitution was not meant to apply to the states.

The First Amendment was specifically drafted and adopted in reference to the historical fact that Eighteenth Century England had officially adopted the Church of England as a national church. It was for this reason that the First Amendment provided that the Congress "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...."