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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes that U.S. teachers are mostly uninformed and misinformed about the appropriate place of religion on the school campus and in the classroom. Four critical questions are addressed; (1) What does the U.S. Constitution say about education and/or religion? (2) What are the current court decisions regarding specific religious teaching or activities in the school, and how informed are elementary teachers about these decisions? (3) Regarding religion and related curriculum, what do elementary teachers do/teach in the classroom? and (4) Do the basic beliefs and value systems of teachers match those of the general population? A 10-page written survey was distributed at random to approximately 100 public and parochial elementary school teachers in Hawaii and in California. Forty-eight (38 public and 10 parochial) were returned and evaluated. A literature search was used to gain additional data related to the topic. Charts and graphs accompany the text. The survey instrument is appended. (EH)

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Elementary Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs Regarding
Religion and Education
Compared With the American Population as a Whole,
and
Related Legal Decisions

A Plan B Paper submitted to the
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,
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MASTER OF EDUCATION IN TEACHING

Pamela Sisemore
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There is an assumption on the part of many that the United States Constitution requires a "separation of church and state", and that means that religion cannot be supported at all in any public institution, such as the school. Some believe that religion cannot even be discussed in the classroom. There are others, on the other hand, who, seeing that the Constitution makes no mention of said "separation of church and state", believe that basic religious principles should be taught to students and a daily time for prayer should be provided by the school.

Whether one is religious or not, religion is an important subject in any case because of the intense emotion and strong conviction inherent in the whole concept, and because of the potential hard feelings among those of different views. Very religious people tend to see non-religious viewpoints or those of other religions as absolutely and totally unacceptable, with a passion that has started many wars. At the same time there are those who fervently believe that, as Karl Marx said, religion is an "opiate of the people" and would be best banned from our lives.

However, what any one person feels or "knows" may not be the same as what is actually legal in view of U.S. and State Constitutions, or in view of both historical and recent court decisions, which are interpretations of those Constitutions. And, since there

is sometimes media attention, publicizing the related legal suits that are brought before the courts, many educators simply avoid the very mention of the subject of religion out of fear of causing trouble for themselves and their schools. This results in the students losing access to a complete education. The Supreme Court has warned that the danger of a "chilling effect upon the exercise of vital First Amendment rights must be guarded against by sensitive tools which clearly inform teachers what is being proscribed."¹ Teachers and parents would be much more unified and we can assume that education, therefore, would be improved, if they were all working from an accurate knowledge of the law and of each others' intentions and desires in this matter, regardless of their personal beliefs.

The results of such knowledge could be far-reaching. It should remove the educators' fear of doing or saying the wrong thing, since the teacher would know what is legally allowed and what is disallowed. It should also restore some of the trust between parents and educators that has faded because of the parents' fear of the usurping of their authority and value systems, and teachers' fear of intrusive "trouble-makers". When the legal guidelines are brought out and examined, when we find out what educators are really doing and what textbooks are teaching instead of guessing and assuming, and when we learn about the values and desires for the children from both parents and teachers,

¹ Keyishian v. Board of Regents (1967). Quoted in Whitehead, John W., "Your Rights in the Public Schools" (Charlottesville, Va., 1994), p. 12.

then both parties will know what to expect from each other and will be much less afraid of offending or being offended, "getting into trouble" with administrators, or becoming involved in a lawsuit. In addition, if, when the laws and the teacher practices are understood, we don't like what we see, we can rationally try to change them.

This paper is a study of the proposition that teachers in the United States are for the most part uninformed or misinformed about the appropriate place of religion on the school campus in general, and in the classroom in particular. It is also proposed that the related beliefs and value systems of teachers are very similar to the rest of the population.

OBJECTIVES

This paper has two objectives. The first is to determine teachers' knowledge regarding the legality of specific religious activities and teaching within the school and the classroom. The second objective is to find out what teachers are really teaching, and whether teachers and the general population have similar basic attitudes, values and beliefs.

The desired result is to bring religion "out into the open", so that the community can know what they can expect from their education system regarding religious teaching and activities, and teachers and administrators can confidently do their jobs within known legal parameters, without fear of displeasure or reprisal from parents and other

community members.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Four critical questions are examined:

1. What does the U.S. Constitution say about education and/or religion?
2. What are the current court decisions regarding specific religious teaching or activities in the school, and how informed are elementary teachers about these decisions?
3. Regarding religion and related curriculum, what do elementary teachers do/teach in the classroom?
4. Do the basic beliefs and value systems of teachers match those of the general population?

PROJECT FORMAT

The study was carried out in two phases. The first phase was a written survey of teachers (Appendix A). This ten-page questionnaire asked about what they actually taught last year regarding the Pilgrims, Columbus, Christmas, and other curricular subjects, as well as regarding values or moral precepts. They were also asked what they believe is legal/illegal in teaching values, beliefs, writings, etc., that seem to have a religious flavor. In addition, some information about their own teacher education was requested. Finally, they were asked whether they believe certain specific activities on the campus or in the classroom are constitutional or not. These questionnaires were given to both public and parochial elementary school teachers in Hawaii and in California. The

schools represented by these teachers were chosen randomly. Of approximately one hundred questionnaires distributed, forty-eight were returned and evaluated, 38 public and 10 parochial.

The questionnaire was used to help answer critical questions two, three, and four. Specific items on the questionnaire were selected as most representative of the larger questions under consideration, and were the items used to supply data for the critical questions, along with some statistics found in the literature. These items have been numbered and marked with an asterisk on the sample questionnaire (Appendix A).

The second phase involved examination of related research, and researching the legal answers to the items on the questionnaire. The Hamilton Library computer search involved several words in many combinations.² Both CARL and ERIC COMBINED were searched, and some references were located in the Law Library. Except for these (and there are several law periodicals devoted to education law), the search resulted in mostly philosophical or historical treatises (Barton, Fenwick, Silva) or opinion monographs (Kahn, Lickona, Michener). On the subject of related teacher attitudes and beliefs the statistical sources were few and incomplete, many too old to be reliable for

² The words used were, religion, Bible, prayer, creation, morals, beliefs, textbooks, attitudes, education, school, teacher, parent, poll, law, elementary, Christian, values, evolution, Columbus, Christmas, history, constitution, conservative, family, religious.

current use. Only data from the last ten years was used for this study. The legal resources, with assistance from the Rutherford Institute³ in understanding the legal code, were used in answering critical question number two.

FINDINGS

Data from the survey and the literature search were used to examine each of the critical questions.

Question 1. What does the U.S. Constitution say about education and/or religion?

The phrase "separation of church and state" is not in the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment, adopted in 1790, addresses the subject of religion as follows:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The attitude toward religion in education on the part of the signers of the Constitution and the authors of the Amendments is clear from their statements in speeches and other documents. George Washington gave a speech in 1779, to the chiefs of the Delaware Indian tribe, when they visited him and brought him three young Indians to be trained in American schools. After assuring them that "Congress...will look upon

³ The Rutherford Institute is an international non-profit legal and educational civil liberties organization.

them as their own Children," he commended them, saying, "You do well to wish to learn our arts and ways of life, and above all, the religion of Jesus Christ. These will make you a greater and happier people..."⁴ James Madison, known as the "Chief Architect of the Constitution," served eight years in congress, eight years as Secretary of State, and eight years as President of the United States. It can be assumed that he knew the intentions of the Constitution. He is quoted as saying,

We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government; upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.⁵

Other men involved in the writing of the Constitution had similar views:

Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, of inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of the Deity and...the love of their country...in short, of leading them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system.⁶

Religion is the only solid basis of good morals; therefore education should

⁴ Washington, George, *The Writings of Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), Vol. XV, p.55, from speech to the Delaware Indian Chiefs on May 12, 1779. Quoted in Barton, David, *The Myth of Separation* (Aledo, Tx: WallBuilder Press, 1992). p.92.

⁵Lane, Harold K., *Liberty! Cry Liberty!* (Boston: Lamb and Lamb Tractarian Society, 1939), pp.32-33. Quoted in Barton, p. 120.

⁶ Samuel Adams, quoted in Wells, William V., *The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1865), vol. III, p. 116. Quoted in Barton, p. 130.

teach the precepts of religion, and duties of man towards God.⁷

Further, the Congressional Records of June 7 - September 25, 1789, clearly show that the intent of the First Amendment was to not have one Christian denomination running the nation - in the words of James Madison, a "national religion". The word "religion" in the founding fathers' First Amendment discussions meant a single Christian denomination (Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational, etc.), and nothing else, as can be seen by the dozen or so drafts of the First Amendment. They did not want any denomination to receive government favors or to speak for the American people.

Fisher Ames, who offered the final wording for the Amendment, in a later (1801) magazine article expressed concern that as more textbooks came into use in the schools, the Bible would be pushed into a corner of the classroom. He said this should never be allowed - that the Bible should always be the number one textbook in the school room. Clearly, the use of the Bible in schools did not violate the First Amendment according to its principal author. The public statements of Benjamin Rush, Noah Webster, James Madison, George Washington, John Adams, and other framers of the Constitution, show that there was never an intent to separate religion from public life, but that they did not

⁷ Gouverneur Morris, quoted in Sparks, Jared, *The Life of Gouverneur Morris* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1832), Vol. III, p. 483. Cited in Barton, p. 120.

want a national religion, meaning a national denomination.⁸

In addition, the politicians of that time passed an ordinance that would insure the place of religion in education:

The Northwest Ordinance, originally approved by Congress on July 13, 1787, while the nation was still operating under the Articles of Confederation, was repassed by the founders following the ratification of the Constitution so that it would remain effective under the new form of government. The Northwest Ordinance...was signed into law by President George Washington on August 7, 1789, in the midst of the time that the same Congress was formulating the First Amendment....The *United States Code Annotated*, under the heading 'The Organic Laws of the United States of America,' lists our significant governmental instruments: the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Northwest Ordinance...⁹

Article III of this Ordinance reads as follows:

Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.¹⁰

The interpretation of the Constitution by early Supreme Courts confirms the intentions of the framers that education should be based on Christianity.¹¹

⁸ Barton, David, "The Foundations of American Government" (WallBuilders: Aledo, Tx, 1992), video. See also Boles, Donald E., *The Bible, Religion, and the Public Schools* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1965).

⁹ Barton, p. 37.

¹⁰ *The Constitutions of the United States of America with the Latest Amendments* (Trenton: Moore & Lake, 1813), p. 364. Quoted in Barton, p. 38.

¹¹ See Barton, esp. Ch. 4: *The Court's Early Rulings* and Ch. 5: *Other Organic Utterances*

The now common "separation of church and state" phrase is actually contained in a letter by Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association, who had heard a rumor that Congregationalism was going to become the national religion. Jefferson's statement was an assurance to them that this could not happen because of its prohibition in the First Amendment. For 150 years the Courts used this letter to help insure that freedom of religious expression, freedom from a national religion, would continue. It was not until 1947 (*Everson v. Board of Education*), that Jefferson's phrase was taken out of context and used to prohibit religious expression in public. Then in 1962 (*Engel v. Vitale*), the Court redefined the word "church", which had meant "denomination", to mean "religious activity in public", reversing the intent of the writers of the Constitution.¹²

The importance of the change in direction shown by these two decisions depends entirely on one's belief about whether the Constitution should be interpreted in 1994 the same as it was by its writers and their contemporaries. In the present study, 31% of the teachers said it should be interpreted the same today, and 33% said they don't know.

Question 2. What are the current court decisions regarding specific religious teaching or activities in the school, and how informed are elementary teachers about these decisions?

The misinformation about legal parameters regarding religion in schools is evident in many current complaints brought against secondary schools or school boards, as a

¹² "The Foundations of American Government", video.

result of some principals and board members insisting that all religious activity must be banned from school. Accounts of these can be found regularly in the daily newspaper, on network newscasts, and various magazines. They concern equal access for religious groups, graduation prayer, abstinence-based sex education, and other issues. One such case in an elementary school, however, shows the extent to which some principals erroneously believe they must go. In Missouri, on at least three separate occasions, a ten-year-old boy was disciplined and subjected to public ridicule by the principal and other school officials because he bowed his head and prayed silently over his lunch in the school cafeteria. His school record now says he is a religious troublemaker.¹³ If the school personnel had been aware of the legal rights, limitations, and responsibilities of both child and school, this would have been avoided. (The subject of prayer in school is discussed later in this section.)

A significant finding in this study is that of all the possible answers to the legal/Constitutional items (including those not numbered), 26% were "Don't Know". On every item there were at least 15%, and up to 45%, of teachers who responded "Don't Know". One of the basic facts, that freedom of religion is guaranteed by the First Amendment (item number 59), was answered "Don't Know" by 23% of the teachers.

¹³ June, 1994, letter from John W. Whitehead of The Rutherford Institute

The numbered legal/Constitutional items in this questionnaire can be divided into eight categories: a) administrative authority, b) the Bible, c) required reading or activities, d) literature distribution, e) prayer, f) teaching religious history, g) equal access, and h) religious expression. The court decisions on these topics will be discussed, along with the responses of the teachers in this survey. The numbers in parentheses after the category heading correspond with the questionnaire item numbers that are discussed.

a. Administrative Authority (item #'s 36, 37, 44, and Misc.[p.7])

Two items in this category involve teaching AIDS education and evolution. A large number of teachers (42% and 51%, respectively) believe that teachers can legally be forced to teach these, even if they personally object.

In fact, they seem to be correct. "Public school teachers generally cannot override the authority of the school board by selecting the content of their instructional programs or by omitting items from the prescribed course content."¹⁴ On the other hand, "Schools cannot force a teacher to violate his or her religious beliefs to receive the benefit of employment in the public school system unless the school narrowly tailors its policy to further a compelling state interest."¹⁵ Also, the state may not "impose upon the

¹⁴ Palmer vs. Board of Education (1979). Cited in Whitehead, p. 14.

¹⁵ Sherbert vs. Verner (1963). See also Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993. Cited in Whitehead, p. 15.

teachers...any conditions that it chooses..."¹⁶ As an example,

...a teacher probably has some degree of academic freedom in teaching about human origins: he or she could discuss problems in the theory of evolution from a secular, scientific perspective and probably could discuss creationism objectively as a view of human origins in which some people believe....However, [Edwards vs. Aguillard] might prohibit a teacher...from presenting creationism...on a par with the theory of evolution as a plausible scientific account of human origins."¹⁷

But "academic freedom would not entitle a teacher to refuse for religious reasons to teach about evolution in defiance of a curriculum adopted by his superiors. See *Palmer v. Board of Educ.*,...."¹⁸

According to the survey 23% of the teachers have been told to teach things they do not want to teach, or in a way they do not want to teach them. Sex Ed (64%) was named most, followed by AIDS, morals, child-directed learning, and acceptance of all lifestyles and beliefs (36% each). The teaching of character was mentioned by 18%. Of these who answered "Yes" to the item asking whether they had been told to go against their desires, 55% also answered "Yes" to the item, "have you ever not complied, because of your beliefs?"

¹⁶ *Epperson vs. Arkansas* (1968). Cited in Whitehead, p. 14.

¹⁷ Sendor, Benjamin B., *A Legal Guide to Religion and Public Education* (Topeka, Kansas: National Organization on Legal Problems of Education, 1988), p. 34-35.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

b. The Bible (# 38, 39, 40, 46, 47, 51, 55)

Only 28% of teachers believe they are allowed to post the Ten Commandments on a classroom wall, while 32% do not know. But 64% believe that the "Golden Rule" (Do unto others....") can be posted. This may be because this scripture has become so common, even among non-Christian people.

The Supreme Court, in 1980 (*Stone v. Graham*), in response to a Kentucky statute that required the posting of the Ten Commandments in each classroom, said,

This is not a case in which the Ten Commandments are integrated into the school curriculum, where the Bible may constitutionally be used in an appropriate study of history, civilization, ethics, comparative religion, or the like....Posting of religious texts on the wall serves no such educational function....it is not a permissible state objective under the Establishment Clause.¹⁹

The Bible, however, may be in a school library, as may most any other book. "School authorities retain considerable discretion in choosing the contents of school libraries," and "students...have a right to be free from official conduct intended to suppress ideas expressed in certain materials."²⁰ Seventy-four percent of the teachers realize this, although 21% said they don't know if the Bible can be in a public school

¹⁹ Quoted in McMillan, Richard C., *Religion in the Public Schools: An Introduction* (Mercer University Press, 1984), p. 193. It might be noted, however, that a 1973 Court decided the posting of the Ten Commandments was constitutional (*Anderson v. Salt Lake City Corp.*).

²⁰ *Board of Education v. Pico* (1982) and *Pratt v. Independent School Dist.* (1982). Cited in Whitehead, p. 8.

library.

The actual reading of the Bible, according to the teachers, is allowed or not depending on the circumstances (See Figure 1). They said that a teacher cannot read from the Bible during story time (57%), but may read from it during free reading time (47%). They thought that the most acceptable occasion for Bible reading is when a student reads during free reading time (77%). Even so, there were many dissenters, especially to the items regarding the teacher doing the reading.

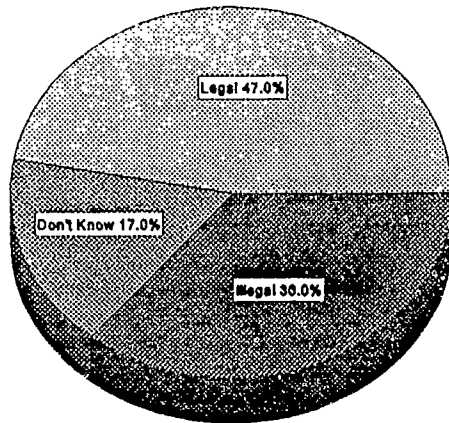
In fact, in *Roberts v. Madigan* (1991), the court held that the school can prohibit a teacher from reading his or her Bible during a silent reading time, prohibit the placing of his or her Bible on his/her desk, and prohibit the displaying of religious posters in the classroom.²¹ Whether any particular school or district would actually prohibit these things, however, depends on the particular administrators.

On the other hand, as the Court in *Stone v. Graham* suggested, the Bible used in a secular study of history, civilization, ethics, comparative religion, and the like, is an acceptable use. In addition, according to the *Roberts v. Madigan* Court,

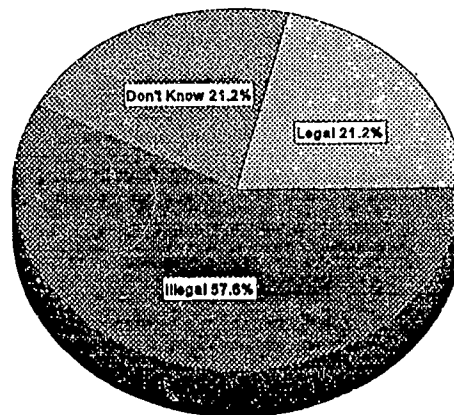
A teacher's silent reading of the Bible does not in every instance result in a constitutional violation. Where the Bible serves as a secular educational

²¹ Whitehead, p. 13.

Silent Bible Reading by Teacher



Story Time Bible Reading by Teacher



Student Free Time Bible Reading

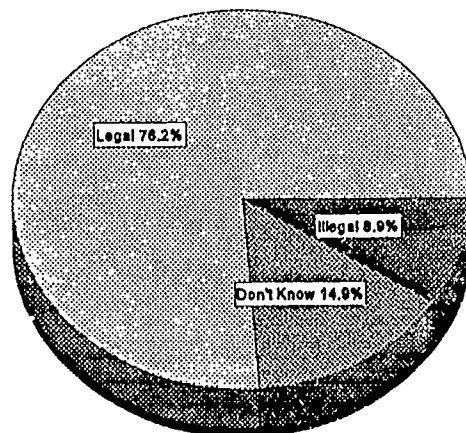


FIGURE 1

reference, is related to an approved curriculum, or is read in such a manner that students are insulated from undue religious influence or indoctrination, then school officials may not prohibit its use or presence in the classroom.²²

It appears, then, that story-time Bible reading by the teacher could be allowed, depending on the teacher's intentions. As for student Bible reading during free reading time, the "right to know", which the Supreme Court has identified as an "inherent corollary of the right of free speech"²³, would go a long way toward supporting this activity, especially since the Bible may be in the school library.

c. Required Reading or Activities (# 41)

"The Supreme Court has not yet ruled on whether parents have the right to have their children excused from attending certain classes or from using certain course materials that the parents find objectionable because of their religious beliefs. Recent lower court decisions have produced mixed results."²⁴ As far as the actual changing of texts and courses that offend religious beliefs, courts have "generally rejected" these attempts.²⁵

One of the questionnaire items concerned the assignment of a controversial novel,

²² Quoted in "School Law Bulletin", 1989 Fall, p. 33-34.

²³ Board of Education v. Pico (1982). Cited in Whitehead, p. 8.

²⁴ Whitehead, p. 23.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

Catcher in the Rye. Eighty-one percent of the teachers said it is illegal to give a student a failing grade for refusing to read such a book, and 17% did not know. As indicated above, it may not be legal for a student to refuse to read the book, depending on the state. The ethics of a teacher giving a failing grade on the basis of a student's sincerely held belief, however, might be questioned. Such students are commonly allowed to choose another appropriate book.

Regarding other activities religiously offensive to any particular student, it was decided in 1943 (*West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*), that Jehovah's Witnesses are not required to salute the flag or recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Any belief, however, must be sincerely held, the religious tenet must be an essential part of the religion, the school activity or regulation must create a substantial burden on the student, and the "state" must prove that its policy is narrowly tailored to further a compelling interest.²⁶

d. Literature Distribution (# 42, 43)

Forty-three percent (43%) of teachers in the survey believe that a child passing out religious pamphlets on school grounds after school is illegal, and 40% believe the same is true for passing out anti-religious pamphlets. For both items, thirty percent answered

²⁶ *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), *Sherbert v. Verner* (1963), *Harris v. McRae* (1980), Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993. Cited in Whitehead, p. 22.

"Don't Know".

But students do have a right to distribute publications of any kind on campus, unless the literature is "libelous, obscene, disruptive of school activities, or likely to create substantial disorder, or which invades the rights of others."²⁷ This protection specifically includes religious literature. Schools, however, may place reasonable time, manner, and place restrictions on the distribution, but their policies cannot be an attempt to discriminate against certain viewpoints.²⁸

e. Prayer (# 45, 49, 50)

Few (21%) of the teachers believe that a voluntary, denominationally neutral prayer may be offered in school. But 38% answered "Don't Know".

In fact, the 1962 *Engel v. Vitale* case for the first time declared voluntary nondenominational prayer in school to be unconstitutional. What is allowed, according to the *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985) decision, is a period of silence, without the mention of the word "prayer".²⁹ In the case of a student asking the class to say a prayer for his very

²⁷ *Frasca v. Andrews* (1979). Quoted in Whitehead, p. 6.

²⁸ *Perry Educ. Assn. v. Perry Local Educ. Assn.* (1983), *Henry v. School Board* (1991), *Nelson v. Moline School District No. 40* (1989). Cited in Whitehead, p. 7.

²⁹ Fenwick, Lynda Beck, *Should The Children Pray?* (Waco, Tx.: Baylor University Press, 1989), p. 172-173.

ill father, another item on the questionnaire, it seems that this period of silence would be the only allowable alternative. But thirty-two percent of the teachers said they believe the prayer in this circumstance would be legal.

According to a 1967 decision (*DeSpain v. DeKalb County Community School District*) it is unconstitutional to say a "prayer" even when the word "God" is not contained in it. The teachers either thought this was legal (64%) or answered "Don't Know" (28%). Only four (9%) realized that this, too, is not allowed.

f. Teaching Religious History (# 48, 56)

There were only six teachers (13%) who believe that they cannot teach their students about the influence of religion on the beginning of the United States, but there were twelve (26%) who answered "Don't Know". Interestingly, none of the teachers believe that a video accomplishing the same task is illegal, and only 15% answered "Don't Know".

The matter was decided in 1963, with the *School District of Abingdon Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp* case. Justice Clark delivered the opinion of the Court:

...it might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented

objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.³⁰

Justice Brennan, concurring:

The holding of the Court today plainly does not foreclose teaching *about* the Holy Scriptures or about the differences between religious sects in classes in literature or history. Indeed, whether or not the Bible is involved, it would be impossible to teach meaningfully many subjects in the social sciences or the humanities without some mention of religion. To what extent, and at what points in the curriculum, religious materials should be cited are matters which the courts ought to entrust very largely to the experienced officials who superintend our Nation's public schools. They are experts in such matters, and we are not.³¹

g. Equal Access (#53, 58)

One of the questionnaire items concerns students forming a Bible Club on a public school campus. Only 5 teachers (11%) think this is illegal, but 19% answered "Don't Know". In 1984, Congress enacted the federal Equal Access Act (EAA). What was once the prerogative of local school officials is now subject to federal regulation. The EAA requires schools to give religious student groups the same rights and privileges as non-religious student groups. However, this applies only to public secondary schools that receive federal funding, and the school must have created a "limited public forum" (i.e., one or more non-curriculum related student groups are allowed). The rulings on elementary school situations have been divided, depending on the state, but there is not

³⁰ Quoted in McMillan, p. 163.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

yet a federal ruling. Evidently a lot depends on the age and maturity of the students. According to some of the State Courts, the younger the students, "the less able they are to distinguish between school-sponsored and individual expression", so what would be allowed in a middle school or high school might not be allowed in an elementary school, because the younger children may see the activity as being school-endorsed.³² Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the teachers believe that it is legal for students to voluntarily meet before school to pray and study the Bible. For secondary students under the previously mentioned conditions, it is. Information on Hawaii or California rulings for elementary students was unavailable at the time of this writing. In Hawaii, no related case has yet been introduced.

h. Religious Expression (# 54, 57)

Christmas carols and nativity scenes in public schools are two different things, according to the teachers. A majority (62%) believe that religious Christmas carols are legal, but perhaps not the nativity scene (45% saying they are legal). Twenty-eight percent (28%) and thirty-two percent (32%), respectively, answered "Don't Know". According to the decisions in *Allegheny County v. Greater Pittsburgh Chapter ACLU* (1988) and *Florey v. Sioux Falls School District* (1980), both are allowed under certain

³² *Duran v. Nitsche* (1991) and *Hedges v. Wauconda Community Unit School District* (1992), cited in a legal brief by the Rutherford Institute, *Equal Access in Public Schools* (B-1, 3/15/93).

conditions. If a holiday has both a secular and a religious aspect, "and if it is presented as the cultural and religious nature of the holiday, schools may include religious music, art, literature, and drama in their curriculum" and, "teachers must present the material in 'an unbiased and objective manner without sectarian indoctrination.'" ³³ Seventy-six percent (76%) of the respondents in a 1992 Wirthlin poll agreed that a school should be allowed to display a manger scene or a menorah during the holiday season. ³⁴

Although holiday activities may be objectionable to some children's parents, "they probably cannot be excused from school just because they may be exposed to ideas or practices that are contrary to their religion." However, they cannot be forced to say or do anything forbidden by their religion. ³⁵

Question 3. Regarding religion and related curriculum, what do elementary educators do/teach in the classroom?

The questionnaire items that were used in the discussion of this question can be divided into eight categories: a) general, b) values, c) heroes, d) holidays, e) evolution, f) the Bible, g) acceptance of all views and values, and h) textbooks. The numbers in parentheses after the category heading correspond with the related questionnaire items.

³³ Cited in Whitehead, p. 27.

³⁴ "Citizen" magazine, June 20, 1994, p. 5.

³⁵ The Rutherford Institute, *Recognition of Religious Holidays in Public Schools* (pamphlet, 1993), p. 4.

a. General (# 7, 9, 10, 11)

Regarding curriculum, at least some teachers may be less inhibited than before about mentioning religious aspects of a subject. In answer to the question, "...have you changed your attitude toward and/or presentation of any of the above subjects since you began teaching?", six (13%) said they are now more likely to believe in teaching or to actually teach about religious views or the Bible. At the same time, 84% of the public teachers said "No" to the question, "If you taught/talked more about religion and religious principles, do you think you would be totally supported by the school system and by parents?"

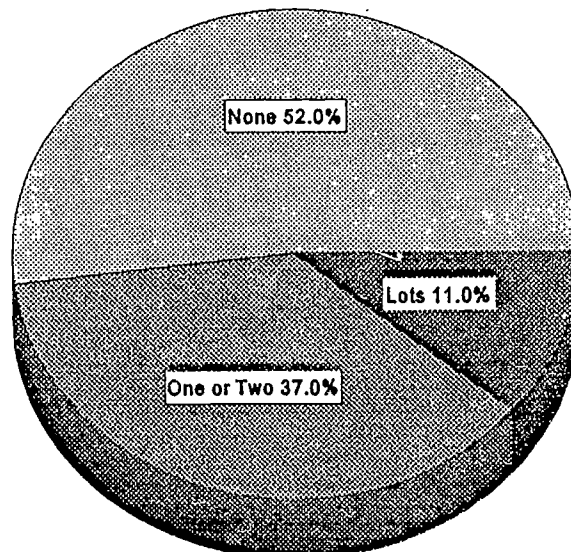
Forty-seven percent (47%) of the respondents said they are aware of one or two (37%) or "lots" (11%) of parental concern regarding the teaching of religious principles, morality, or religious history. However, only 16% are aware of parental concern on the part of one or two parents (11%) or "quite a bit" (5%) of concern regarding the same not being taught (See figure 2). Those parents who believe more of these concepts should be taught are evidently not as aggressive with their beliefs as are the opponents of such teaching.

b. Values (# 12)

The reason may be that the parents believe teachers are generally instilling moral values without mentioning religion anyway. According to this survey, 87% of public

Teaching Religious Principles, etc.

Teachers Aware of Parental Concern



Not Teaching Religious Principles,...

Teachers Aware of Parental Concern

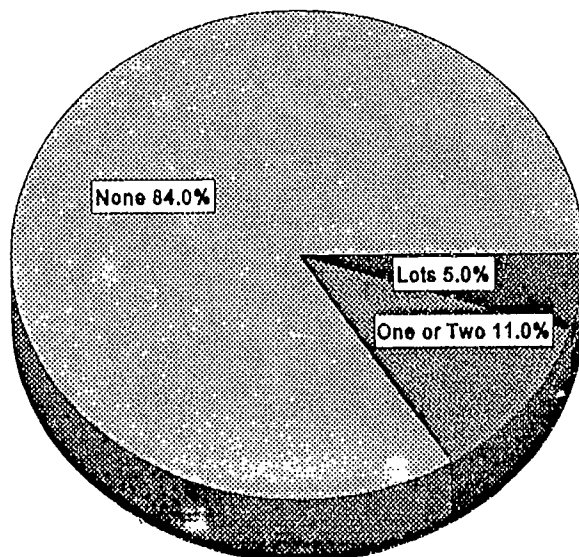


FIGURE 2

school teachers and 90% of parochial teachers (88% combined) teach such absolutes as "It's always wrong to...lie, take illegal drugs, swear, steal." However, only 53% of public teachers, versus 80% of parochial teachers (58% combined), teach that children should always obey their parents. The reluctance by public teachers to teach obedience to parents may be a result of the growing awareness of abuse by parents instead of a more liberal point of view about obedience, because only 5% of these teachers (none of the parochial) teach, directly or indirectly, that "children should have the same rights as adults and their opinions should count as much as those of adults." In addition, 82% (81% combined) teach that "children should show respect to and defer to (normal) adults". Eighty percent (80%) of the parochial teachers teach this.

c. Heroes (# 1, 2)

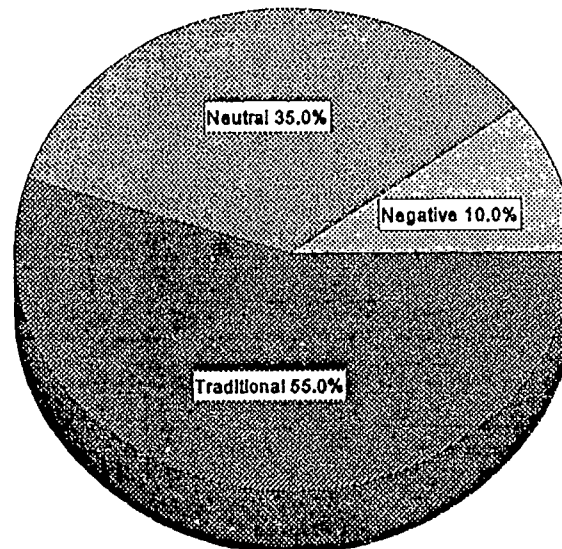
The well-publicized concept proposed in recent years that Christopher Columbus and other explorers/discoverers and even the Pilgrims were not at all the heroes they have been made out to be, has in some circles been expanded so as to cause outright embarrassment or shame over our "greedy", "bigoted", "land-stealing" predecessors. This has caused concern in some parents and others, who say that there is a difference between presenting the truth and destroying the character and the positive effects of basically honorable people, and that the negative accounts are exaggerated. As a whole, elementary teachers have been conservative in their response to the new interpretations.

Only ten percent (10%) of the teachers in this survey supported a negative attitude toward Columbus in the classroom this year, and two percent (2%) supported a negative view of the Pilgrims. Thirty-five percent (35%) presented both views of Columbus and supported a neutral opinion, while twelve percent (12%) did the same for the Pilgrims. Of the teachers over age forty-five, 61% presented the traditional view of Columbus and 82% the traditional Pilgrim Story. For those under forty-five, the numbers were 47% and 76%, respectively. Four teachers (9%) taught the "traditional Pilgrim Story" with religious references deleted. Three of these (30% of their age category) were under thirty years old and one (5% of the age category) was 45 or older (See Figure 3 and 3A). In this study at least, more of the younger teachers were willing to accept the "absolutely no religion in the classroom" position, either because they are more fearful of reprisals or because they truly agree with it. It is also interesting to note that three of the teachers (8% of those covering Columbus) indicated they were uncertain of the truth about Columbus but covered the subject anyway, and two (4%) skipped the subject altogether because "I didn't know what to teach about him."

d. Holidays (# 3, 4, 5)

When asked whether their class learned about Chinese New Year, only 25 (52%) of the teachers said they mentioned it at all, most of them teaching in Hawaii. Five presented the religious aspect of the holiday in a positive way, and the rest were neutral.

View of Columbus Presented



Views of Pilgrims Presented

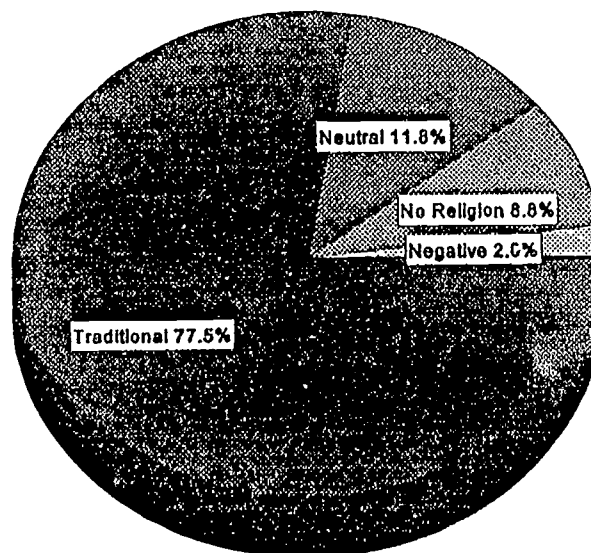
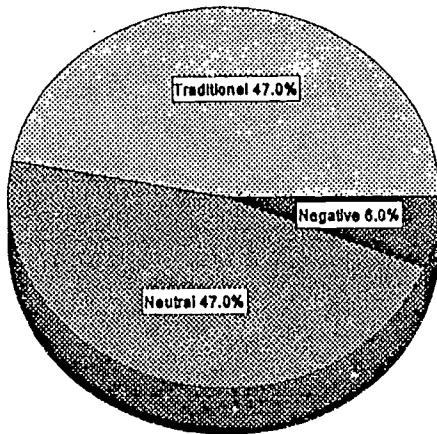


FIGURE 3

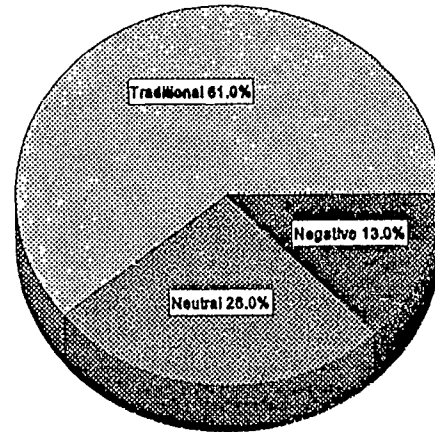
Teachers Under Forty-five

Views of Columbus Presented



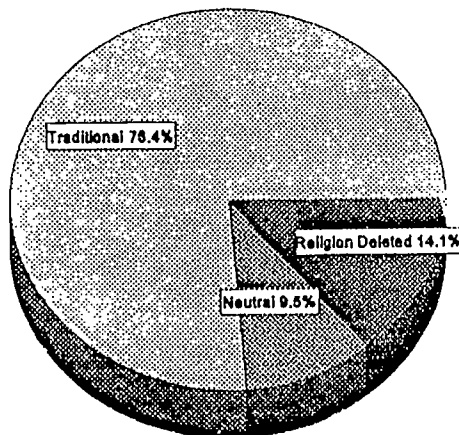
Teachers Over Forty-five

Views of Columbus Presented



Teachers Under Forty-five

Views of the Pilgrims Presented



Teachers Over Forty-five

Views of the Pilgrims Presented

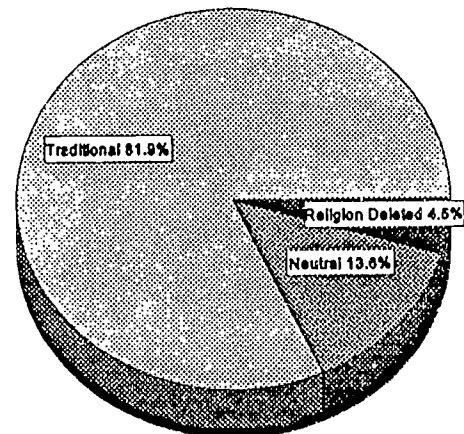


FIGURE 3A

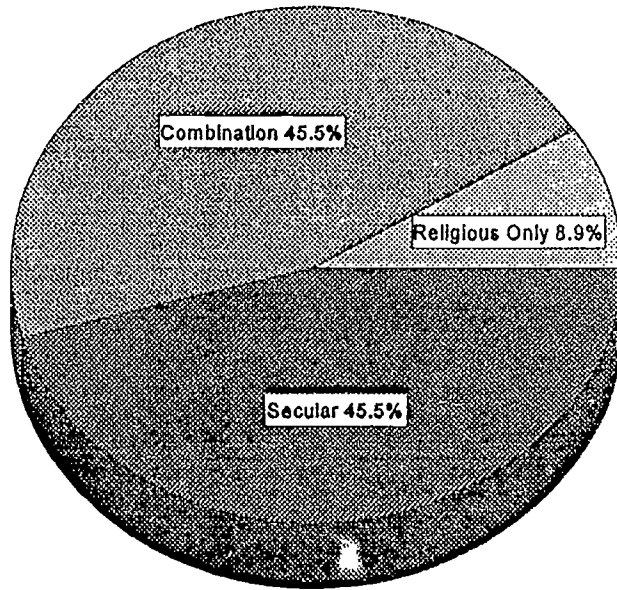
Eight (80%) of the ten parochial school teachers discussed and practiced only the religious aspects of Christmas, and three of the public school teachers (9%) did the same (24% combined). Another sixteen (46%) of the public teachers had both religious and secular discussions and activities (40% combined) and an equal number (36% combined) covered no religious aspects at all in the classroom (See Figure 4). Only one teacher said that he/she has stopped mentioning the religious significance of holidays "because of the laws". Another boldly proclaimed no fear of State or Federal laws. However, one teacher may be speaking for many others when he/she said "I have a Jehovah Witness in my class so I beware."

Easter was skipped by nineteen percent of the public school teachers, and none taught it solely as a religious holiday, as 70% of the parochial school teachers did. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the public teachers combined the religious significance with the secular (Easter Bunny, Spring, etc.), and fifty-seven percent (57%) covered the subject in a strictly secular way (See Figure 5).

e. Evolution (# 6, 12)

Evolution has long been a point of contention between some parents and schools. A 1993 Gallup Poll found that 47% of the general population believes that "God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so". Thirty-five percent (35%) believe that evolution took place over millions of years

Public Teachers - Christmas



Parochial Teachers - Christmas

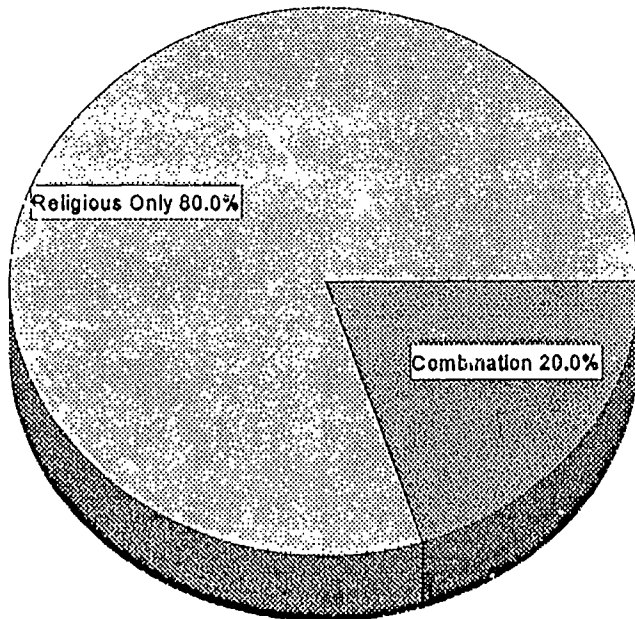
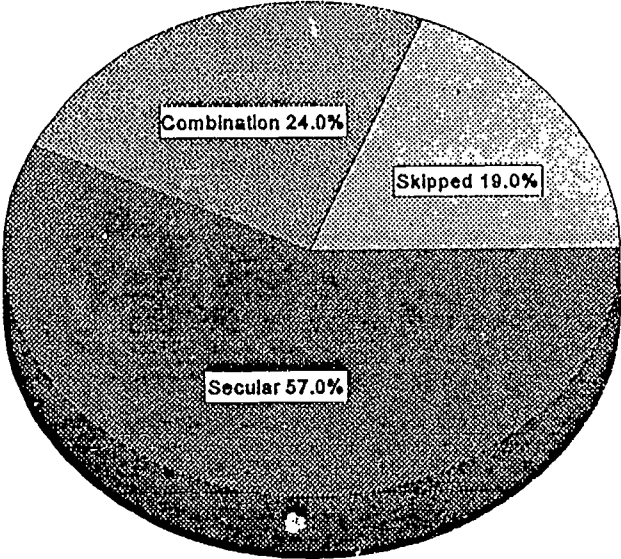


FIGURE 4

Public Teachers - Easter



Parochial Teachers - Easter

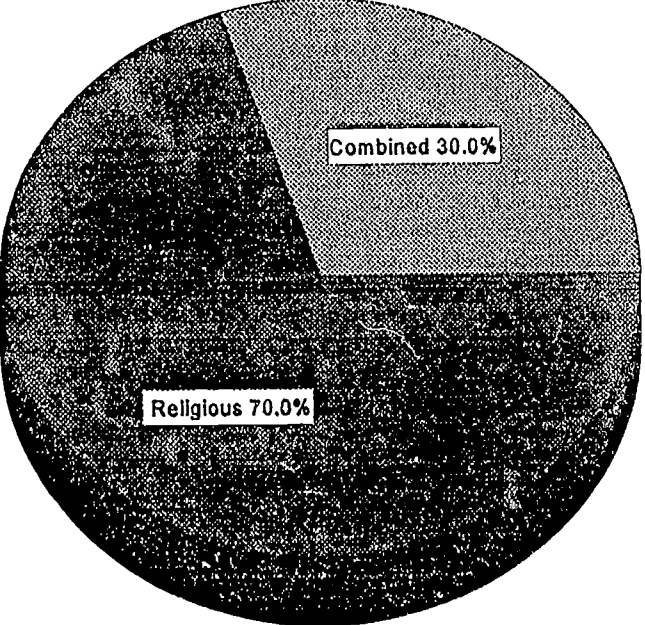


FIGURE 5

but with God's help, and eleven percent (11%) take the pure evolution perspective, which claims that God had no part in the process. It is interesting that most science and social studies textbooks, as well as educational videos and other materials, teach the pure evolution viewpoint.

Only one (parochial school) teacher said he/she tells the students the material is wrong on this point. Two (again, parochial school teachers) said they skip the parts that talk about evolution. The majority of both parochial teachers (67%) and public teachers (71%) present the different views of origin, while 28% of public teachers use the material with no comment (See Figure 6).

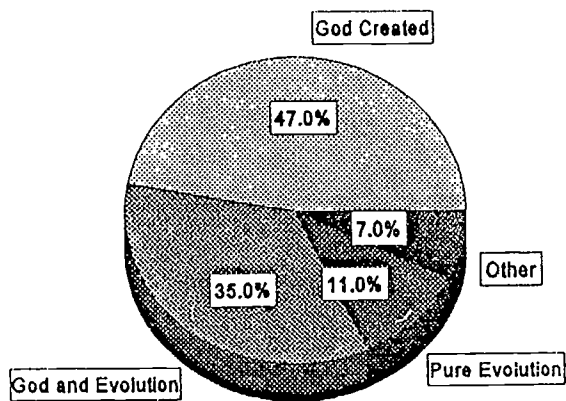
Responding to another item, twenty-one percent (21%) of public teachers (63% of those thirty and older but only 15% of those under thirty) teach either directly or indirectly that God created everything. Ninety percent (90%) of parochial teachers teach the same.

f. The Bible (# 8)

There are a few scriptures from the Bible that have become commonly accepted sayings in this country, which may account for the fact that at least some public school teachers (18%) feel confident enough to display them on banners or posters in the classroom. As with some of the other items on the questionnaire, significant differences

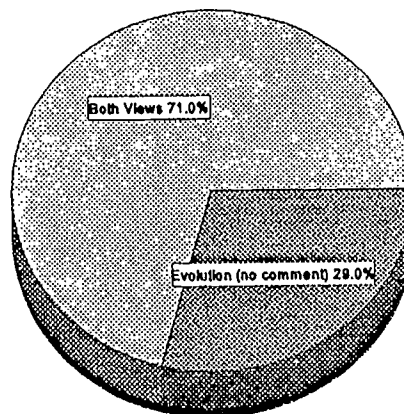
1993 Gallup Poll

Evolution and Creation



Public Teachers

Evolution and Creation



Parochial Teachers

Evolution and Creation

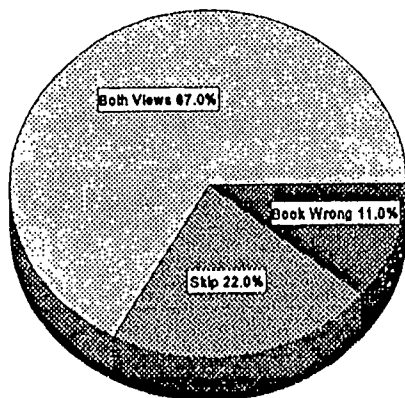


FIGURE 6

were found when the answers were divided according to age. The percentage of over-45 public teachers who display such scriptures is much higher (57%) than that of the younger teachers (29% of the 30-44 year olds and only 14% of those under thirty). The "Golden Rule" is the most common scripture used. Ninety percent (90%) of parochial teachers display scripture in the classroom.

g. Acceptance of all views and values

Sixty-six percent (66%) of public school teachers teach, directly or indirectly, that "we should be open to and tolerant of many religious (not just Christian) views". Forty percent (40%) of the parochial teachers teach this. Also, 66% of the public teachers believe students should be taught that all cultural values are equally valid or acceptable. Only 30% of the parochial teachers share that belief, while 40% are undecided. Since religion is a major component of any culture, these two statements are closely related. And, since a 1993 Gallup Poll found that 86% of the population identifies with the Christian religion, this leaves plenty of room, especially for zealous Christians, to be upset with such acceptance in the classroom.

h. Textbooks (# 60)

In 1986 Paul Vitz conducted an in-depth study of American school textbooks. One of his findings was that "Not one of the...ten thousand pages [in the students' textbooks] had one reference to a primary religious activity occurring in representative

contemporary American life." ³⁶ The next year Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, an education researcher, wrote an article explaining her view of why "fundamentalist" and other parents had been complaining about textbooks. She said,

In my own reading of history textbooks, I find that the few discussions of religion tend to be dry-bones accounts of the observable behavior of various religious groups:....There is an almost total absence of any inside view. Words such as faith, love, heart, soul, sorrow, pain, pride, greed, or evil are almost never used. Reading these textbooks, one gets the impression that religion is nothing more than a fun spoiler, like parents and teachers. There is not even a hint that there were compensations to believers who chose to subject their lives to a force outside themselves. Without even that hint, it would be difficult for any student to understand why young Puritans didn't just run away into the woods to live with the Indians ³⁷

In other textbooks she found that

There is no suggestion....that the source of authority for 'values' may reside outside the individual....Realizing one's full potential is seen as the highest good. Maturity appears to consist of departing from the values of one's parents, church, and peers, although nowhere is it suggested that it might also be necessary to depart from the values implicit in the textbook. With few exceptions, the ultimate authority on morals and ethics is assumed to be the student's own opinion....The underlying message in these books is that 'you' are the most important thing in the world. ³⁸

In 1987 at a conference called by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the publishers complained that this was "textbook bashing year".

³⁶ Vitz, Paul C., *Censorship, Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1986), p.11. Quoted in Barton, p. 152.

³⁷ *The Values Vacuum*, in "American Educator", Fall, 1987. p.18.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.19.

Indeed, in addition to other complaints, there were "five major studies from a variety of sources" that charged publishers with inadequate coverage of religion in social studies texts, even as allowed by the Supreme Court. The publishers' response was that "teachers and curriculum directors are not asking for it. They're afraid to take it up in class." The Council for Basic Education proposed to the publishers, among other corrections, the use of "bold writers" who are not afraid and know how to treat controversy.³⁹

The publishers may have listened, because a 1992 review of ten contemporary trends in social studies⁴⁰ revealed a renewal of teaching the role of religion in history as well as renewed attention to Western ideals in American society. However, in many cases teachers will not have access to the new books until the old ones wear out, perhaps in several years. As a result, they have not yet been through the selection process which exposes them to the offerings of the major publishers. This is perhaps why 63% of the questionnaire respondents said they did not know if the "latest social studies textbooks portray the religious influence on early American life pretty accurately", and only 17% answered "Yes" to that item.

³⁹ The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1987, summary comments.

⁴⁰ Risinger, C. Frederick, *Current Directions in Social Studies* (Boston, Ma.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1992).

Question 4. Do the basic beliefs and value systems of teachers match those of the general population?

The components of this question are: a) intensity of religious beliefs, b) influence of religion, c) prayer, d) character, e) sex education, f) the homosexual lifestyle, g) abortion, h) the Constitution, i) teacher education classes, and j) teaching values. The numbers in parentheses correspond with the questionnaire items that were used in each discussion.

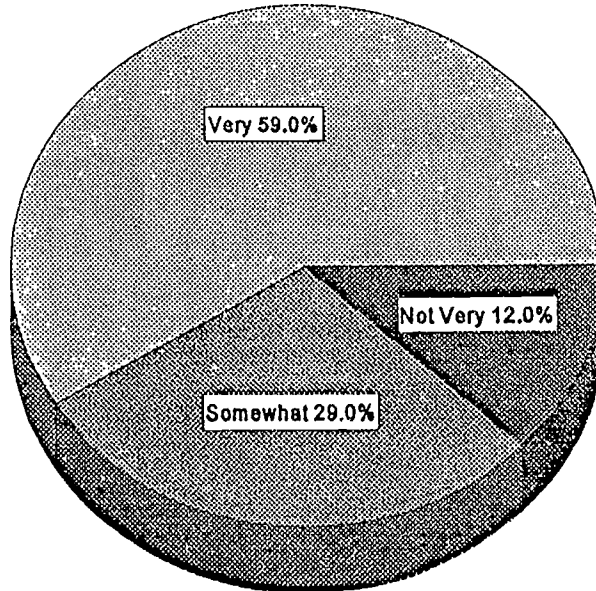
a. Intensity of Religious Beliefs (questionnaire heading, # 63, 64)

A questionnaire item of perhaps major interest to parents regarding overall beliefs of teachers shows agreement between teachers and the general population. Fifty-two percent (52%) of all teachers are "very" religious, and 38% are "somewhat" religious. When they are divided into public and parochial groups, 42% of public and 90% of parochial teachers are "very" religious. Only 13% of the public teachers are not religious. The 1993 Gallup Public Opinion Poll shows that, similar to the combined teachers statistic, 59% of the general population consider religion "very important" in their life, and only 12% say it is "not very important" (See Figure 7).

A majority (56%) of teachers believe that Americans are less religious now than they were in the 1940's. Data from that time was not available, but in the 1952 Gallup Public Opinion Poll, a much larger 75% of those polled said that religion was very

1993 Gallup Poll

Importance of Religion



Public Teachers

Importance of Religion

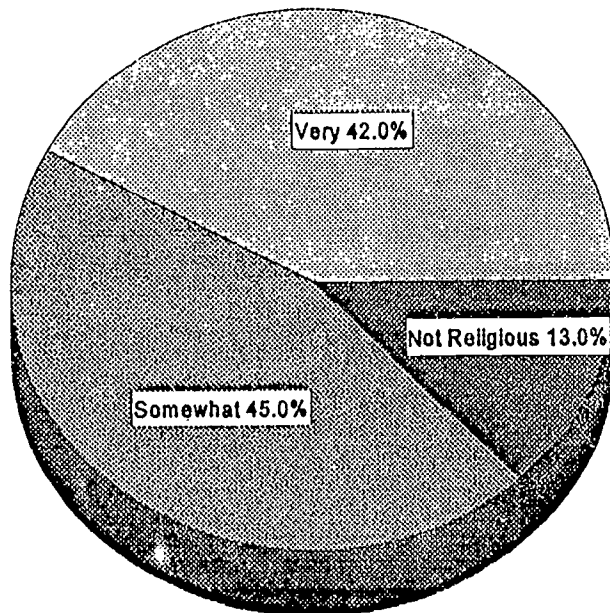


FIGURE 7

important to them. Since 1978, however, when the response was 52%, the percentage has been very stable, in the 50's.⁴¹

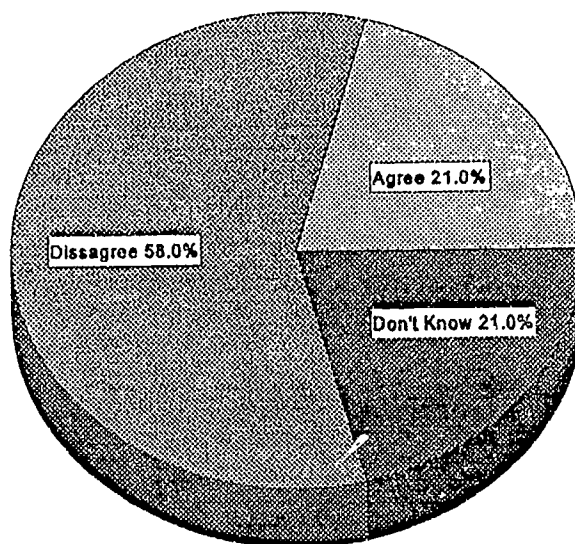
On a questionnaire item related to this, 50% of the teachers believe that "there are a lot of atheists or non-religious parents who would be offended at the positive mention of God in the classroom", and 40% are not sure. This one belief has to have a major effect on what the teachers say in the classroom. As observed above, though, only 12% of the population would be considered atheistic or non-religious. These may be quite vocal at times, but there is probably less reason for the teachers to be fearful than they currently believe.

b. Influence of Religion (# 13, 23, 24)

Regarding Christianity in general on the campus and in the classroom, twenty-one percent (21%) of the public school teachers believe the subject "should be avoided altogether". Fifty-eight percent (58%) disagree, however, and 47% say that "our societal ills could be greatly reduced if Christian principles were actively taught in schools". In fact, 45% believe that our societal ills could be greatly reduced by learning and honoring Bible scriptures (See Figure 8). In 1993, in answer to a related question, 29% of the Gallup Public Opinion Poll respondents said that a decline in the influence of religion is a

⁴¹ Gilbert, Dennis A., *Compendium of American Public Opinion* (1988), p.307., and *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1993*, p.158.

Christianity Should Be Avoided



Learning Scriptures

Would Reduce Societal Ills

Christianity Would Reduce Social Ills

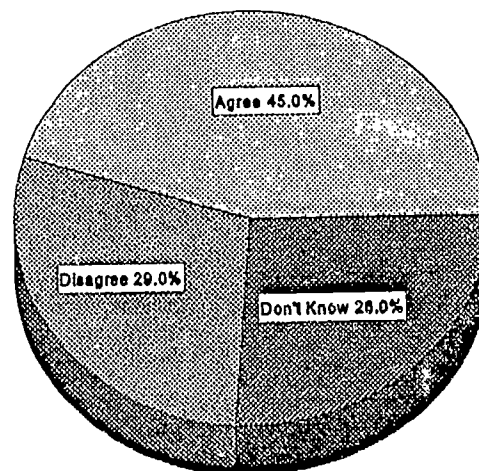
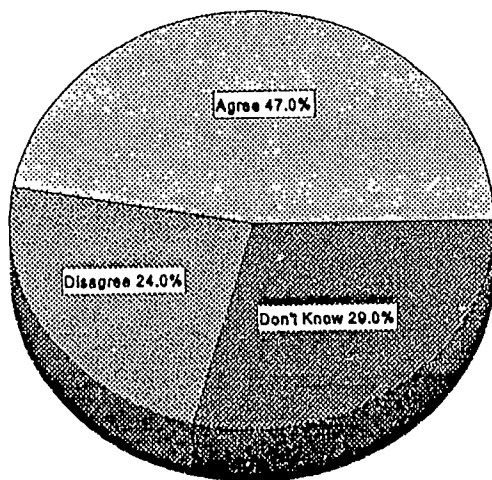


FIGURE 8

critical factor in the crime rate.

At the same time, forty-two percent of responding teachers believe that U.S. federal and state laws are becoming more intolerant of Christianity.

c. Prayer (# 19, 20, 22)

Since the 1962 *Engel v. Vitale* decision banning voluntary nondenominational school prayer, prayer in public schools has been a heated issue. A 1987 Gallup Poll found that 68% of the population favored a constitutional amendment that would allow prayer in the classroom. (In addition, a 1984 ABC News/Washington Post Poll found that 65% opposed the Supreme Court's decision to prohibit prayer in public schools.)⁴² Also in 1987, a sample of the membership of Phi Delta Kappa, an education fraternity, showed that only 31% of those teachers favored the proposed constitutional amendment. However, included along with the data was a footnote that said, "It should perhaps be noted that a disproportionately large number of Phi Delta Kappa members live in communities served by America's more fortunate schools."⁴³ The pollsters recognized that people who live in such communities, those more educated and wealthier, are more likely to have a negative view of religious matters in a public forum.

⁴² Gilbert, p.318.

⁴³ Elam, Stanley, Ed., *The Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Polls of Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, 1969-88* (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1989), p.227.

That group of teachers may not have wanted a constitutional amendment regarding prayer, but the public school teachers questioned in the study at hand show a more favorable response to prayer in the classroom. Forty-seven percent (47%) believe that students and teachers should be allowed to have voluntary prayer together if it is prayer that would satisfy Christians, Moslems, Buddhist, and Jews. Forty-two percent (42%) even believe that a strictly Christian, non-denominational prayer should be allowed (See Figure 9). A 1992 poll conducted by the Wirthlin Group found that 75% of the respondents favor prayer in public schools.⁴⁴

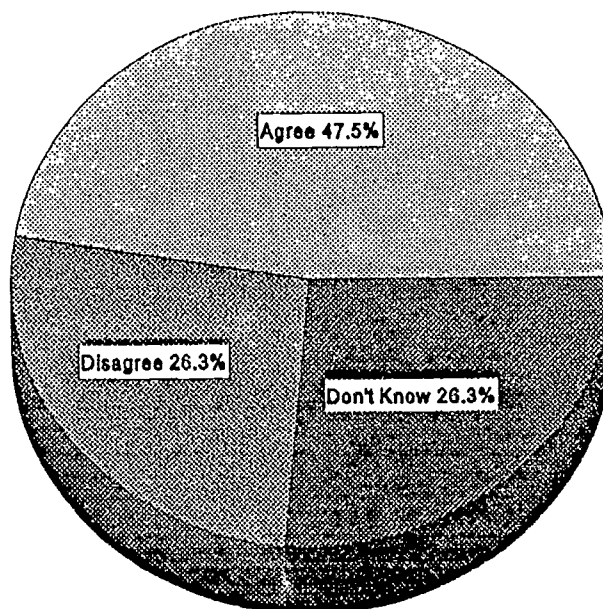
Forty-two percent (42%) of the teachers say that "the banning of prayer and scripture reference in schools is related to a lot of our current societal problems." Again a difference can be seen between the under-30 group (30% agreeing with this last statement) and the thirty-and-over group (46% agreeing).

d. Character (# 18)

Ninety-seven percent (97%) of teachers in the survey at hand believe that "character" should be actively taught in the classroom, while in a 1987 Gallup Poll a relatively low 43% of the population agreed. Evidently the respondents in the Gallup poll did want their children to learn about character, though, because another 36% said that

⁴⁴ Cited in "Citizen" magazine, June 20, 1994, p. 5.

Prayer O.K.'d by All Religions



Nondenominational Christian Prayer

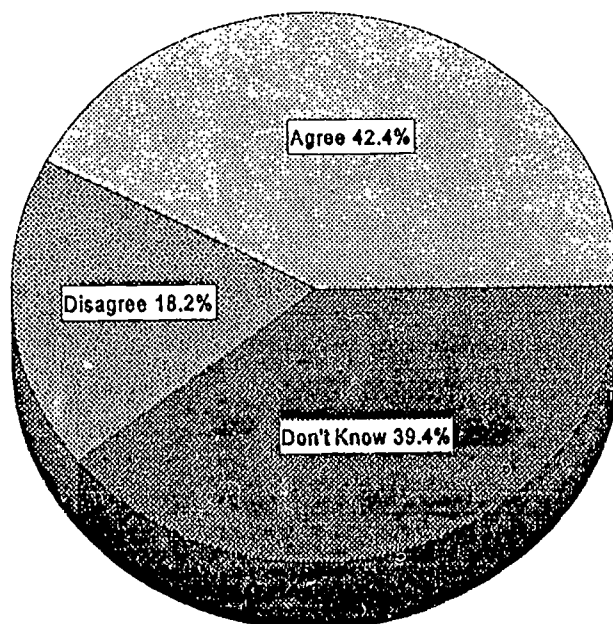


FIGURE 9

parents and churches should be the ones doing the teaching instead of the schools. The total of these responses, however (79%), is still lower than the teachers' response. The reason for this difference is not known, but if it is merely the result of the seven-year span between the two polls, parents may by now agree with the teachers after all.

e. Sex Education (# 14, 28)

Sex education, including at the elementary level, has steadily gained favor among the general population in the last thirteen years. In 1981, 45% approved of "sex ed" in the classroom for elementary children. The 1987 poll shows that 55% approved in that year. By 1988, 89% said that AIDS education, a closely related issue, should begin at between five and twelve years of age.⁴⁵

One hundred percent (100%) of parochial school teachers in our sample, compared with 68% of public school teachers, believe that sex education should be taught to elementary children. Of those who believe it should be taught, all of the parochial teachers and 59% of the public teachers (68% of the total), believe it should be taught "with Christian morals". Thirty percent (30%) of the public teachers think it should be taught "without Christian morals", and eleven percent (11%) do not think it should be taught at all in the elementary school (See Figure 10).

⁴⁵ Elam, p. 8, 214.

Sex Education in Elementary School

Public Teachers

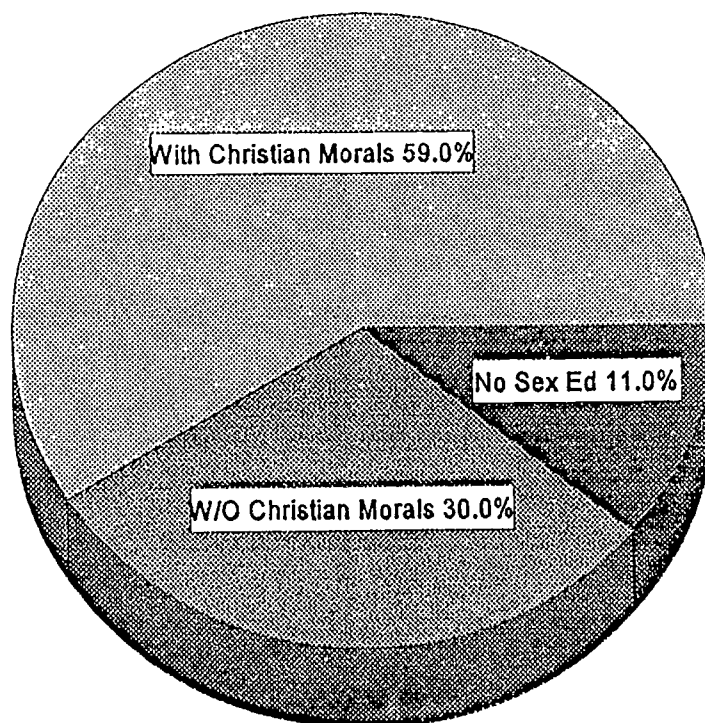


FIGURE 10

The 1985 Gallup Public Opinion Poll revealed that 44% of public school parents thought "birth control" should be taught in elementary school, but effecting this number is the fact that the poll's definition of elementary school was grades four through eight. If grades seven and eight are eliminated from the question, the results would more likely correlate with the teachers' responses in this questionnaire. Of our respondents, only 32% of public school teachers and none of the parochial teachers (25% of all teachers) agreed that students should be taught about the use of contraceptives.

f. The Homosexual Lifestyle (# 16)

The homosexual lifestyle is another subject on which teachers and the general population beliefs are very similar. Forty-five percent (45%) of the public teachers say students should be taught to respect this lifestyle, and none of the parochial teachers agreed. When the two groups are combined, the percentage advocating respect of homosexuality is 35%. The 1992 Gallup Opinion Poll shows that 38% of the general population would agree.

g. Abortion (# 17)

On abortion, teachers and the general population may agree only somewhat. Fifty percent (50%) of the public school teachers, but only 10% of parochial school teachers, agree with the statement, "students should be taught to respect both abortion rights and anti-abortion views." When the two groups are combined, we find 42% agreeing with the

statement and 35% disagreeing. The 1993 Gallup Opinion Poll shows that only 32% of respondents believe abortion should be legal under any circumstances, and therefore might agree that both views should be respected. However, 46% view people active in the abortion-rights movement either "mostly" or "very" unfavorably, and it might acceptably be supposed, would disagree with respecting both sides.

h. The Constitution (# 61, 25, 62, 27, 26, 34, 35)

Beliefs about the U.S. Constitution and its meaning for us today are certainly at the root of much of the conflict regarding religion and education. If one believes that the Constitution should be interpreted in 1994 as it was in 1778, then very different conclusions will be drawn, in opposition to the conclusions that will be reached if the bottom-line belief is that interpretations should evolve with society's changes in values and attitudes. As stated earlier, thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents believe that "the Constitution was intended to be interpreted the same forever", 33% do not believe this, and a similar number (35%) said they do not know.

The statement, "The framers of the Constitution never intended for public education to include religious instruction" was agreed with by only 13% of the public school respondents (10% of the total) and none of the parochial school respondents, although 33% of all the teachers said they don't know. In addition, only 10% of the total group of teachers believe that "the framers of the Constitution wanted the U.S. to be a

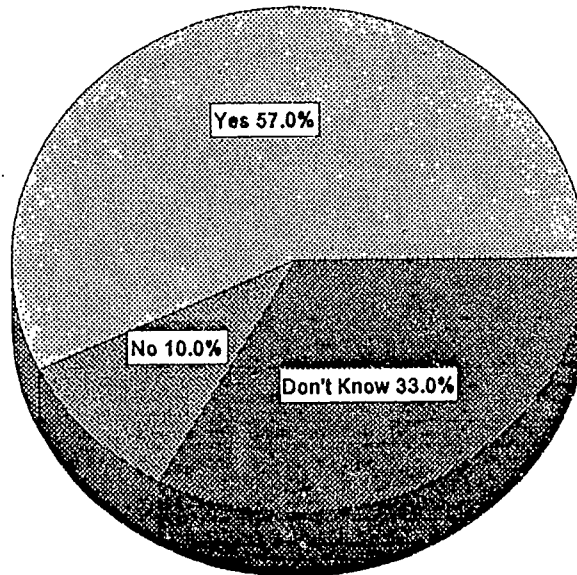
publicly secular one, without religious underpinnings or responsibilities", and 48% disagree, although a large 42% do not know (See Figure 11). This shows that many (48-57%) of the teachers realize the importance of religion in education in 18th century America.

However, only 39% of the public teachers but 80% of the parochial teachers, agreed that the "framers" intended for the United States to be a specifically Christian nation, as opposed to a generically religious one. The truth of this statement can be effectively debated, but an even more telling item on the questionnaire is, "Even if the framers of the Constitution intended for public education to include religious instruction, this is an evolved society and teaching should change to fit the times." Only ten percent (10%) of the parochial teachers and 29% of the public teachers agreed. Forty-four percent (44%) of all the teachers disagreed, and 31% said they don't know.

As was shown earlier, there is a great deal of confusion about what is Constitutional. There is an interesting difference between public and parochial teachers on the items, "I have read the U.S. Constitution" and "I have studied the U.S. Constitution, either in school or on my own." Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the parochial teachers answered "Yes" to both questions, but fewer (79%) of the public teachers have read the Constitution and only 66% have studied it.

Religious Instruction in School

Intentions of Constitution Framers



U.S. To Be Publicly Secular

Intentions of Constitution Framers

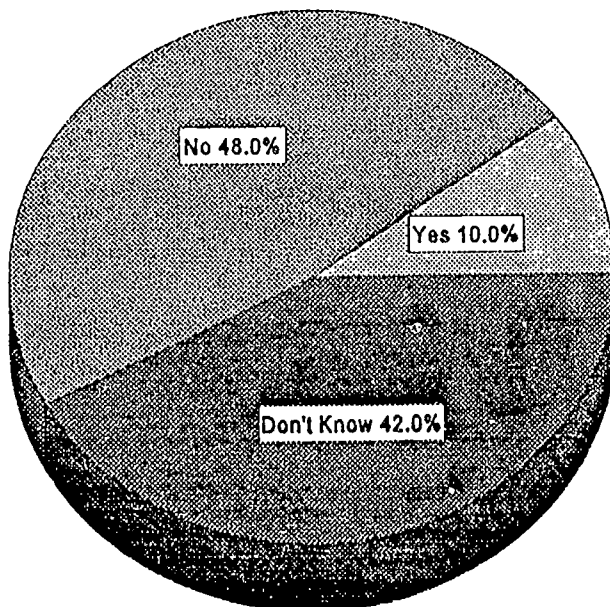


FIGURE 11

i. Teacher Education (# 30, 31, 29, 33)

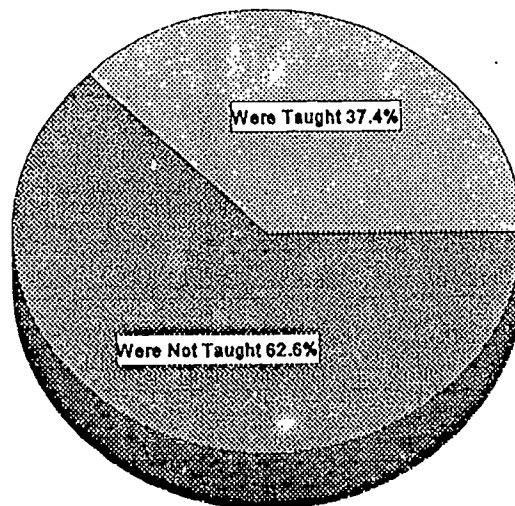
Of the teachers who could remember, 38% were taught in their Education classes that "there is no place in the classroom for religion in general or Christianity in particular". The change in this teaching over time is evidenced by the fact that a much greater proportion of those under thirty (67%) than are 30-44 (56%) or forty-five and over (15%) received the message.

On the other hand, 87% of all teachers who could remember were taught in their Education classes that the U.S. Constitution calls for a "separation of church and state", including all of those under 30. At least some of the parochial school teachers, however, do not believe what they were taught, since only 63% answered "Yes" to the item, "Does the U.S. Constitution require a 'separation of church and state'?" Seventy-four percent (74%) of the public school teachers answered "Yes". Of the total responses, 25% of the parochial teachers and only 9% of the public teachers answered "No" (See Figure 12).

Another item on the questionnaire again shows an evident change over time in the education of teachers. Regarding values, 89% of those under thirty, 55% of those 30-44, and 61% of those 45 and older (66% of the total number who remembered), were taught that teaching and learning should be values-neutral, that is, all opinions are to be respected as being equally valid. Interestingly, only 50% of those under thirty, but 55% of the middle group and 68% of those 45 and older actually taught that "we should be

No Place for Religion in School

Teacher Education



Belief - Separation of Church & State

All Teachers

Separation of Church and State

Teacher Education

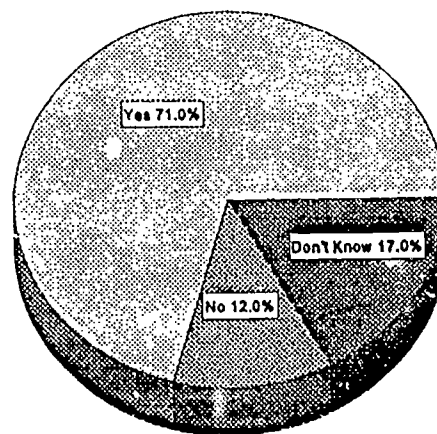
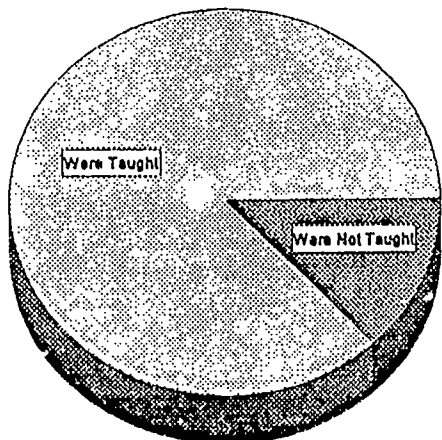


FIGURE 12

open to and tolerant of many religious (not just Christian) views" (item 12).

j. Teaching Values

Teaching values is one of the latest issues talked about in educational circles. *Educational Leadership*, the journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), devoted two back-to-back monthly issues to values and morality in November and December, 1993. In the November issue in separate articles educators are encouraged to "mine the values in the curriculum", given examples of what makes character education programs work, told how to get consensus from the community about what values to teach, taught how to design an ethic class, given an example of "the healing power of altruism", and more.

Elsewhere, Stanford University professor John Gardner is quoted as saying, "after many years of exploring the limits of living without ethics, a lot of people are saying, 'It won't work.' I think there's a movement back toward commitment to shared goals."⁴⁶

Some administrators are actively seeking out positive role models from religious quarters, in order to promote values:

Michael Peace has gone from the ghettos of New York City to America's public schools to tell students how he escaped life on the streets. Christian

⁴⁶ Quoted by James A. Michener in "Teachers In Focus", January, 1994, p. 12.

rap music and a no-holds-barred approach get kids' attention in Peace's school meetings. "It's amazing because the schools - not the students, but the leadership - have approached me and have literally begged us to bring God into the schools," said Peace, in an interview....⁴⁷

Whether based on religion or not, "Character education has become a movement", according to an article in Teacher Magazine.

It has a new national organization (The Character Education Partnership), and national forum (The Journal of Character Education), as well as best-selling books..., academic think tanks..., and nonprofit organizations - all devoted to the teaching of values in our schools. Its curricula are being taught in thousands of classrooms, and the number of teachers using them is on the rise. Even *USA Today* earlier this year proclaimed that we are in the midst of a character education boom.⁴⁸

Developmental psychologist and education professor Thomas Lickona says, "We are seeing the beginnings of a new character education movement, one which restores 'good character' to its historical place as the central desirable outcome of the school's moral enterprise" He does not know the size or scope of the movement, but "something significant is afoot."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ "Citizen" magazine, March 21, 1994, p.6.

⁴⁸ Mark E. Kann, "Teacher Magazine", September, 1993, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Thomas Lickona, *The Return of Character Education*, "Educational Leadership", November, 1993, p.7.

CONCLUSIONS

The Constitution:

Although they did not specifically state so in the Constitution, according to other documents and speeches the framers of the Constitution intended for the United States to be an actively religious nation, with Christianity as the foundation of all life, public and private. State and Federal Supreme Courts, however, have significantly changed the interpretation of the Constitution, especially in the last forty-seven years. One's opinion of this phenomenon is pivotal, determining whether he/she agrees with the latest court decisions or is appalled at the departure from the original intent of the founders of this country. The response of the teachers appears to show their conservatism: Only 25% agreed that teaching should change to fit the times even if the "framers" intended for public education to include religious instruction. This has major implications for their acceptance of anything religious in the classroom.

Current Legal Parameters:

About the legality of specific religious teaching or activities, there is a lot that teachers don't know. On each legal or constitutional item in the questionnaire there were many either "Don't Know" or (probably) wrong answers:

Administrative Authority - 49-58%
The Bible - 23-60%
Required Reading or Activities - 19%
Literature Distribution - 70-73%
Prayer - 59-91%

Teaching Religious History - 15-39%
Equal Access - 30%
Religious Expression - 38-55%

The term "probably wrong" is used because legal decisions involve many exceptions and conditions, which are beyond the scope of this paper. The general results of this study, however, show the serious need for specific legal information in the schools, as well as in the general public, about religion in education.

What Teachers Teach

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the public school teachers in this study said that they do not think they would be supported by the school system and parents if they were to teach or talk more about religion and religious principles in the classroom. In addition, 47% are aware of at least some parental concern about such teaching. Only 16% are aware of any parental concern about the lack of religious teaching. Sixty-three percent (63%) of all respondents, both public and private, do not know whether religion in the U.S. is accurately portrayed in the latest textbooks, and only 17% say it is.

Most elementary school teachers still either teach that Columbus was a brave explorer (55%), or present some potential character flaws and remain neutral (35%). Most (77%) teach that the Pilgrims were mostly courageous settlers in search of religious freedom. Most (70%) present both views of "origins", but 35% teach that God created everything. A large majority (88%) teach at least some moral absolutes. Most (81%) are

teaching their students that children should show respect to and defer to adults. Fewer (58%) teach students that they should obey their parents.

Twenty-four percent (24%) of the teachers cover only the religious aspects of Christmas. Forty percent (40%) cover both the religious and the secular, and 36% mention only the secular. Easter is treated differently, especially by public teachers, being skipped by 19% and covered only secularly by 57%.

Age:

According to this study, when age is considered more of the older teachers (over 45) are likely to teach the traditional instead of neutral views of Columbus (61% vs. 47% of those under age 45) and the Pilgrims (82% vs. 76%), display scripture in the classroom (57% vs. 29% and 14% for the younger groups), and teach that we should be open to and tolerant of many religious (not just Christian) views (68% vs. 55% and 50%).

Public vs. Parochial:

The parochial teachers are much more conservative than public teachers in their teaching. They are more likely to teach obedience to parents (80% vs. 53%), and teach only the religious aspects of Christmas (80% vs. 9%) and Easter (70% vs. 0%). They are not at all likely to accept without comment the evolutionary teaching in books and other media (0% vs. 28%), and most teach that God created everything (90% vs. 21%). They

also are less likely to teach acceptance of all religious beliefs (34% vs. 60%) and cultural values (34% vs. 70%). Because of the ruling against scripture being posted in public schools (but not private), it could be expected that many more parochial teachers (90% vs. 18% of public teachers) display scripture in the classroom.

What Teachers Believe

According to this study, teachers (52%) are just as likely as the general population (59%) to be very religious, or not religious (13% of teachers and 12% of the general population). A majority (58%) of teachers believe that our societal ills could be greatly reduced if Christian principles were actively taught in schools. Many (56%) say that Americans are less religious than fifty years ago, and (50%) that there are a lot of people who would be offended at a positive mention of God in the classroom.

Forty-two percent (42%) to 47% of the teachers believe that students and teachers should be allowed to have voluntary prayer together, while 75% of the general population favor prayer in the schools. Forty-two percent (42%) of the teachers say that the banning of prayer and scripture reference in schools is related to a lot of our current societal problems. Most (97%) believe that "character" should be actively taught in the classroom.

Regarding sex education, 68% of the teachers believe it should be taught with

"Christian morals". Few (25%) believe that the use of contraceptives should be taught in elementary school.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the teachers advocate respect of homosexuality, and 38% of the general population would agree. Forty-two percent (42%) believe that students should be taught to respect both abortion rights and anti-abortion views. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the general population believe that abortion should be legal under any circumstances, but 46% view people active in the abortion-rights movement unfavorably, and might disagree with the teachers. The statistics on this subject do not give a clear answer as to whether teachers and others agree or not.

Teachers are fairly evenly divided over the question of whether the Constitution should be interpreted the same "forever", about a third each saying "Yes", "No", and "Don't Know".

A majority (87%) of teachers in this study who could remember were taught in their education classes that the U.S. Constitution calls for a "separation of church and state", but fewer (38%) were taught that there is no place in the classroom for religion or Christianity. Sixty-six percent (66%) were taught that teaching and learning should be values-neutral.

Age:

There are some differences in teacher beliefs when age is considered. First, more of those thirty and over (46%) believe that the banning of prayer and scripture reference in schools is related to a lot of our current societal problems. Only thirty percent (30%) of those under thirty agree.

Many more of those under thirty (67%) were taught that there is no place in the classroom for religion, than those 30-44 (56%) or forty-five and older (15%). Also, those under thirty (89%) were more likely to be taught that learning should be values-neutral. Only 55% of those 30-44, and 61% of those forty-five and over were taught this. However, this particular view does not necessarily correlate with the teachers' actual teaching in the classroom, since only 50% of the under-thirty age group actually teach that we should be open to and tolerant of many religious (not just Christian) views, and 55% of the middle group and 68% of the older group teach this openness and tolerance.

Public vs. Parochial:

When the teachers are divided into parochial and public groups, we find 90% of the parochial teachers very religious, compared with 42% of public teachers. We also find no parochial teachers agreeing that religion should be avoided in the classroom, while 21% of public teachers agree.

All of the parochial teachers believe that sex education should be taught to elementary students, and all say it should be taught with Christian morals. Only 59% of the public teachers believe it should be taught with Christian morals, and 11% say it should not be taught at all at the elementary level.

None of the parochial teachers but 45% of the public teachers say students should be taught to respect the homosexual lifestyle. Similarly, only 10% of the parochial teachers but 50% of the public teachers think students should be taught to respect both abortion rights and anti-abortion views.

Regarding the Constitution, 89% of the parochial teachers said they had both read and studied it, while 79% of the public teachers have read it and only 66% have studied it. Eighty percent (80%) of the parochial teachers but only 39% of the public teachers agreed that the United States was intended by the "framers" to be a specifically Christian nation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The questionnaire was quite long, and an acceptable amount of data could be gathered from a much shorter one. Also, it would be very helpful when calculating responses if all items addressing the same subject were grouped together.

There were some questionnaire items that were perhaps misunderstood. A few respondents noted that certain items were not clear. The wording of the items needs special attention. Because of this, a personal interview with each teacher would result in more insightful responses, though unless the number of respondents was significantly lower this would be unworkable.

There could be a question as to whether the sample of teachers was a true sample or not. The participation of two schools was almost one hundred percent, but the participation of the rest was much less. There is a possibility that of these schools, only those teachers who are particularly interested in the topic of religion in education responded. On the other hand, the percentage of teachers who said they are not religious corresponds with the percentage in the general population, so interest in the topic may not be an important criterion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The beliefs of teachers regarding religion or religious issues and their teaching is evidently a little-researched topic, one which needs more attention considering the importance of religion to the nation as a whole, and the controversy surrounding religion in education.

The first suggestion for further study is to give the same questionnaire to non-

teaching parents of elementary school children, as well as to the teachers, to more accurately correlate the beliefs of the two groups. The beliefs of administrators might also be useful data. In addition, a more formal statistical analysis might be a profitable next step.

It would be interesting to do this same type of study after all the participating teachers have begun to use the newer textbooks, which reportedly contain more references to religion. In addition, the teachers' treatment of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and perhaps others should be included, to see if, and how, their connection with religion is covered.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Attitudes & Beliefs of Elementary Teachers

Grade teaching this year _____ My school is ___ Public ___ Private

State in which you are teaching _____

Age category: < 30 _____ 30-44 _____ 45 and over _____

Number of years you've taught _____

Do you consider yourself a religious person? No _____ Somewhat _____
Very _____

I. CURRICULUM

* 1. What did you teach about Christopher Columbus this school year? (Check all that apply.)

- _____ The traditional story: he was a brave "hero" (explorer/discoverer).
_____ He was a brave hero but his men were cruel and selfish toward the native people they found.
_____ He was a greedy, cruel man and so were his men.
_____ If one of Columbus' goals was to convert the native people to Christianity, it was inappropriate.
_____ We skipped Columbus because I didn't know what to teach about him.
_____ The whole affair was an inappropriate invasion of a people by imperialistic Europeans.
_____ I was uncertain of the truth about Columbus but covered the subject anyway.
_____ We discussed the differing views about Columbus and I supported the traditional one.
_____ We discussed the differing views and I supported a non-traditional one: _____
_____ We discussed the differing views and I was neutral.
_____ We skipped Columbus because I didn't think he should be considered as significant or worthy of study.

Comments:

* 2. What did you teach about Thanksgiving this year? (Check all that apply.)

- The traditional, Pilgrim Story, with its references to Pilgrims giving thanks to God for their protection and blessings.
- The traditional Pilgrim Story with religious references deleted.
- The native people were "Indians".
- The native people were "Native Americans" or another similar term.
- The Pilgrims inappropriately settled on land not belonging to them.
- Most of those who came on the Mayflower were religious fugitives.
- We discussed the Pilgrims' possible motives, and I supported the (circle one) traditional (mostly religious) / non-traditional (mostly non-religious) view.
- We discussed the influence of the Pilgrims' religion on the beginning of the United States.

Comments _____

* 3. What did you teach during December?

- Ignored Christmas
- Did strictly secular (non-religious) Christmas activities and reading
- Did some reading or activities showing the "religious side" of Christmas, but most was secular.
- The students shared their thoughts about the "religious side" of Christmas.
- Most of our coverage of Christmas was from the religious perspective.

Comments: _____

* 4. Did your class learn about Chinese New Year? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, how did you present its religious meaning?

- Positively
- Negatively
- Neutrally (just stated their beliefs with no comment)

What did you teach about Hannukah?

- Nothing
- Covered it extensively: (circle one) positively / negatively / neutrally
- Only mentioned it

* 5. What did you teach about Easter?

- Nothing
- The religious aspect only (celebration of Jesus' resurrection)
- The secular (non-religious) aspect only (bunnies, baskets, Spring)

_____ Included both religious and secular aspects.

* 6. When a textbook, or book you are reading to the students, teaches evolution, what do you do? (Check all that apply.)

- _____ use the text, with no comment
- _____ skip that part
- _____ discuss (or mention) the different views of origin
- _____ tell the students the book is wrong
- _____ tell them we can't believe everything we read.

Other: _____

* 7. If you have been teaching more than one year, have you changed your attitude toward and/or presentation of any of the above subjects since you began teaching?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please explain: _____

* 8. Do you have any religious writings/sayings displayed in your classroom?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, what is it? _____

In what form (banner, poster, etc.)? _____

* 9. If you taught/talked more about religion and religious principles, do you think you would be totally supported by the school system and by parents? ___ Yes ___ No

Would you teach/talk about religion and religious principles if you knew it was legal, even without parent and school system support? ___ Yes ___ No

* 10. Are you aware of any parental concern at your school regarding religious principles or morality, or religious history, being taught? ___ 1 or 2 parents

_____ lots _____ No

Comments: _____

* 11. Are you aware of any parental concern at your school regarding religious principles/morality/history not being taught?

No Yes, quite a bit Yes, 1 or 2 parents

Comments: _____

* 12. Check which attitudes or beliefs you taught this year, either directly or indirectly.

- It's always wrong to lie or deceive.
- It's always wrong to murder.
- It's always wrong to take illegal drugs.
- It's always wrong to swear.
- It's always wrong to steal.
- The United States is worthy of our loyalty and our pride.
- God created everything.
- Most of the Founders and early settlers of the U.S. were very religious people.
- Children should have the same rights as adults and their opinions should count" as much as those of adults.
- Democracy/republic is the ideal form of government.
- People should take care of themselves whenever possible, rather than be dependent on others.
- ("Normal") Parents should always be obeyed.
- Other responsible adults (teachers, police, etc.) should always be obeyed.
- Children should show respect to, and defer to, (normal) adults.
- "Going to church" is always good.
- Christianity is superior to other religions.
- One particular religion that is not Christianity (Islam, Judaism, etc.), is superior to others.
- We should be open to and tolerant of many religious (not just Christian) views.

II BELIEFS. Circle the appropriate letter for each statement.

A = Agree D = Disagree DK = Don't Know

- A D DK Morality can be taught without the Bible or other religious reference.
- A D DK * 13. The teaching of Christian principles in the classroom and on the campus should be avoided altogether.
- A D DK The teaching of religious principles in general (Christian or other) should be avoided.
- A D DK Schools should supply contraceptives/condoms to any student who wants them.
- A D DK * 14. Elementary students should be taught about the use of contraceptives.
- A D DK * 15. Students should be taught that all cultural values are equally valid/acceptable.
- A D DK * 16. Students should be taught to respect the homosexual lifestyle.
- A D DK * 17. Students should be taught to respect both abortion rights and anti-abortion views.
- A D DK There are moral absolutes (no lying, stealing, cheating, responsibility toward others, obedience to lawful authority).
- A D DK Moral absolutes should be supported and actively taught in the classroom.
- A D DK * 18. "Character" (courage, self-control, charity, perseverance) should be actively taught in the classroom.
- A D DK * 19. Students and teachers should be allowed to have voluntary, non-denominational, "uni-religious" (would satisfy Moslems, Christians, Buddhists, Jews) prayer together.
- A D DK * 20. Students and teachers should be allowed to have voluntary, non-denominational, Christian prayer together.
- A D DK * 21. U.S. federal and state laws are becoming more intolerant of Christianity.
- A D DK * 22. The banning of prayer and scripture reference in schools is related to a lot of our current societal problems.
- A D DK * 23. Our societal ills could be greatly reduced if Christian principles were actively taught in schools.
- A D DK * 24. Our societal ills could be greatly reduced if, in our schools, Bible scriptures were learned and adherence to them was honored.
- A D DK Self esteem can and should be taught without any reference to God or religious principles.

- A D DK Self esteem is a major key to solving our societal problems.
- A D DK * 25. The framers of the Constitution never intended for public education to include religious instruction.
- A D DK * 26. Even if the framers of the Constitution intended for public education to include religious instruction, this is an evolved society and teaching should change to fit the times.
- A D DK * 27. The framers of the Constitution intended for the U.S. to be a specifically Christian nation, as opposed to a generically religious nation.

* 28. Should sex education be taught to elementary age students?

No Yes, with Christian morals Yes, without Christian morals.

Comments: _____

* 29. Does the U.S. Constitution require a "separation of church and state"?

Yes, and I'm glad.

Yes, but I wish it didn't.

No, and I'm glad.

No, but I wish it did.

I don't know but I wish I did.

I don't know and it's not important to me.

III. MY EDUCATION. Circle the appropriate column for each statement.

Y = Yes N = No DR = I don't remember

Y N DR * 30. I was taught in my Education classes that there is no place in the classroom for religion in general or Christianity in particular.

Y N DR * 31. I was taught in my Education classes that the U.S. Constitution calls for a "separation of church and state".

Y N DR * 32. I was taught in my Education classes that learning should be "child-centered", meaning child-directed and child-evaluated.

Y N DR * 33. I was taught in my Education classes that teaching and learning should be values-neutral. That is, all opinions are to be respected as being equally valid.

Y N DR * 34. I have read the U.S. Constitution.

Y N DR * 35. I have studied the U.S. Constitution, either in school or on my

own.

IV. MISC. QUESTIONS. For these statements, check the appropriate blanks.

I have been told to teach things I don't want to teach, or in a way I don't want to teach them. Yes No

IF YES, check the subjects that apply: AIDS education sex education
 morals character
 acceptance of all lifestyles and beliefs child-directed learning
 religious beliefs of others

Other: _____

IF YES, have you ever not complied, because of your beliefs? Yes No

Comments: _____

V. LEGAL. Following are some activities or situations that might be found in an elementary school in the United States. For each one, determine whether you think it is legal, illegal, or you don't know, and circle the appropriate letters.

L = I think it's legal I = I think it's illegal DK = I don't know

- L I DK * 36. You are required to teach AIDS Education, according to a published program that you find objectionable.
- L I DK * 37. You refute (openly disagree with, in class) - the treatment of "Origins" in your class textbook.
- L I DK You are required to allow all religious views to be expressed and treated as equal.
- L I DK * 38. You read to your students from the Bible during story time.
- L I DK * 39. You read from the Bible during free reading time.
- L I DK * 40. One of your students reads from the Bible during free reading time.
- L I DK One of your students takes a Bible with him to recess and tries to convince other students about what it says, or that it is from God.

- L I DK You state, to your students, while studying about Chinese New Year, that the Chinese religion is not true.
- L I DK During December, you talk about the birth of Jesus and teach that the Bible account is a fact.
- L I DK * 41. You assign Catcher in the Rye or some other "controversial" reading. One of your students refuses to read it because of the profanity in it, and you give him/her a failing grade for that assignment.
- L I DK You give your 6th grade class a research assignment: "Discuss two of the pre-human and human beings in man's evolution." One student's answer is, "I do not believe in the evolution of man. I believe that ...(student explains his/her beliefs and backs them up with scripture)." You give that paper a failing grade because of its scientific error and religious content, and for failing to follow instructions.
- L I DK A parent sues you for "religious harassment" of his child.
- L I DK * 42. A child passes out religious pamphlets on school grounds after school.
- L I DK * 43. An atheist passes out anti-religious pamphlets on school grounds after school.
- L I DK A member of a militant homosexual group waits, just outside school property, to talk to potential student recruits.
- L I DK You are an atheist. You try to persuade your students that your beliefs are true.
- L I DK * 44. Your science and social studies textbooks teach the theory of evolution. Your principal has directed you to teach only what the books present.
- L I DK A parent insists that you stop having the class sing "God Bless America" because of its religious content.

- L I DK * 45. A student asks the class to say a prayer for his very ill father. You allow a volunteer to lead the prayer.
- L I DK * 46. You have the scripture "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" on a computer banner, hanging in the front of your classroom.
- L I DK * 47. You tell the Bible account of the "Good Samaritan" and help them draw a lesson from it.
- L I DK * 48. Your class social studies textbook does not have any reference to the influence of religion on the beginning of the United States. You give your students a comprehensive account of this from other sources.

VI. CONSTITUTION. Show whether you believe each of the following statements is Constitutional, Unconstitutional, or you don't know, by circling the appropriate letters.

C = Constitutional U = Unconstitutional DK = Don't Know

- C U DK * 49. A voluntary, denominationally neutral prayer offered in school.
- C U DK A student praying aloud over his/her lunch.
- C U DK * 50. Kindergartners reciting "We thank you for the flowers so sweet; we thank you for the food we eat; we thank you for the birds that sing; we thank you for everything." (The word "God" is not used.)
- C U DK Students arriving at school early to hear a student volunteer read prayers and remarks which have been offered by the chaplains in the U.S. House and Senate.
- C U DK A Board of Education using or referring to the word "God" in any of its official writings.
- C U DK A kindergarten class asking, during a school assembly, whose birthday is celebrated by Christmas.
- C U DK * 51. The 10 Commandments hanging on a classroom wall.

- C U DK Religious brochures or newspapers being distributed on a public school campus.
- C U DK * 52. Homosexual newspapers being distributed on a public school campus.
- C U DK * 53. Students forming a Bible Club on a public school campus.
- C U DK * 54. Christmas carols (religious) being sung in a public school program.
- C U DK * 55. The Bible being in a public school library.
- C U DK * 56. Showing a video about the early U.S. settlers, which shows their strong religious convictions and religious grounds for their daily activities and laws.
- C U DK * 57. A nativity scene in the classroom or on campus, of a public school.
- C U DK You assign a paper with a religious topic.
- C U DK You use the word "God" in class in a respectful manner.
- C U DK * 58. Students voluntarily meeting before school to pray and study the Bible.
- C U DK Students voluntarily meeting during recess or lunch to pray and study the Bible.

VII. THOUGHTS. T = True F = False DK = I don't know

- T F DK * 59. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution's First Amendment.
- T F DK * 60. In general, the latest social studies textbooks portray the religious influence on early American life pretty accurately.
- T F DK Freedom of Speech is guaranteed anywhere.
- T F DK * 61. The Constitution was intended to be interpreted the same forever.
- T F DK * 62. The framers of the Constitution wanted the U.S. to be a publicly secular one, without religious underpinnings or responsibilities.
- T F DK * 63. Americans are less religious now than they were in the 1940's.
- T F DK * 64. There are a lot of atheists or non-religious parents who would be offended at the positive mention of God in the classroom.