## Religion in Public Education

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ments; religion on both sides of the slavery issue; Black religion; non-Western religions in the U.S.; nativism; the temperance movement; the controversy over evolution and other conflicts between religion and science; religion and welfare programs; contemporary church-state problems; religious conflict and abortion rights; religoin, war, and conscientious objection; the modernist-fundamentalist debate; important theologians; religion and the Vietnam War; women and religion; religion and the civil rights movement; religion in public education; the relation between religion and values, daily life, and behavior; the new Religious Right and politics; the "unchurched"; liberal religion and Humanism.

Are educators and textbook publishers ready to deal with these issues fairly and factually? Will most parents go along with factual treatment of these issues? Will religious leaders? At what grade levels will these issues be dealt with? As crowded as the social studies curriculum is—and critics point out that U.S. history and world history are presently poorly taught (and all too often by coaches with little interest in teaching)—where will all this vast amount of material fit?

What about teacher preparation and certification? Will schools erect firm safeguards against proselytizing or slanting of material?

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has madde a good start at approaching the subject of religion in the curriculum. But it's obvious that a great deal more needs to be done.

On the subject of values we have another sticky issue. Schools cannot avoid teaching values, so it's a question of which values are taught. Without going into great detail most of us should be able to agree that there are common, civilized, democratic values which can and should be taught—through example and through the curriculum. There are common values which peoples of all religious and ideological persuasions should be able to agree on, values embodied in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and ethical teachings of most religions and life stances.

Educators and all citizens should concern themselves with the question of values education. As for teaching about religion, we should avoid rushing into something so serious without extreme caution and adequate preparation.


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## *Update,* *continued from page 7*

the city of Lynchburg at the rate of $50,000 per month. Falwell's various ministries took in more than $91 million in the year which ended June 30 and spent $85 million. The balance went to paying of debts estimated to total $52 million.

### Creationism Redux

Although Louisiana's equal-time-for-creationism law was ruled unconstitutional, the battle to protect the integrity of public school science teaching is not over. The Institute for Creation Research, a fundamentalist outfit dedicated to promoting creationism in schools, is claiming that teaching creationism would be constitutional if done for a "secular purpose." The ICR is also trying to persuade teachers to stop teaching evolution.

Oberlin College biology professor Michael Zimmerman reports that nearly 40% of Ohio biology teachers polled favored teaching creation in public schools. He said that most high school biology teachers are themselves poorly educated about evolution. Further, he reports, on a multiple choice question only 11% of the teachers polled selected the correct explanation of evolutionary theory.

### Miscellaneous

On July 6 the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that public high schools cannot include prayers of a particular religion in their graduation ceremonies, but they may use religiously neutral "civil invocations or benedictions" (sic?) without violating the First Amendment. The case, *Stein v. Plainwell Community Schools,* arose in two Michigan school districts. On July 24 a California appeals court in San Francisco ruled that religious invocations at public high school graduations violate both the state and U.S. constitutions.

In July the Elizabethtown, TN school board voted to bar CBM Ministries, Inc. from holding Bible classes in county public schools until a federal court rules on the issue.

A Fairfax County, VA public school teacher has been fined for holding after school prayer sessions with her seventh grade students. Parents had complained that the sessions involved prayer, faith healing, and "anointing with oil." She had reportedly asked the students not to tell their parents who was "encouraging them to be witnesses for Christ."

The Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals has upheld the revocation of the Church of Scientology's tax-exempt status because the church's founder, the late L. Ron Hubbard, had "unfettered control" over millions of dollars in church assets.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia has ruled unconstitutional the funding of religious institutions under the Adolescent Family Life Act.


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