



A Call For
CHARACTER
EDUCATION AND
PRAYER IN
THE SCHOOLS

WILLIAM H. JEYNES

Foreword by
WILLIAM J. MURRAY

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PRAEGER

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FOREWORD

In this time of moral decadence and social decline, unprecedented in our American history, William Jeynes has thrown out a challenge to our nation. His very well documented book, *A Call for Character Education and Prayer in the Schools*, urges parents and educators to turn the public schools away from the godless and amoral path they have been following for the past 30 plus years, a path that has so clearly failed and wrecked the lives of countless young people. His alternative is a commonsense and proven way to help youngsters develop sound moral values, the inclusion of character education and prayer.

Jeynes first presents the whole sad epic of how a few atheist extremists, including my own mother, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, were aided by an unwise and complicit Supreme Court in removing prayer, Bible reading, and, by default, character education from the public schools. When reverence for God and the teaching of God's moral laws were banned in the schools, our society slowly became unmoored from its Christian heritage and adrift in a hedonistic world where the main values of life are personal pleasure, status, and material possessions.

Perhaps the prescriptions in this book, if implemented in the schools, cannot undo all the damage, but new generations of young people could be taught that there is a better and a higher way.

William J. Murray
Chairman
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I count myself fortunate to have been married for 24 years to my wife, Hyelee, whose support has been exemplary. We have three wonderful boys, whom I thank for their love and inspiration. May this book open many eyes and hearts.

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DO AMERICANS NEED MORAL EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RETURNED TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Schools have undergone a substantial transformation in the last 40 or 45 years. There are challenges and problems that schools face today that would have been unfathomable four or five decades ago. In the 1940s and 1950s, public school teachers ranked the top seven major student discipline problems as talking, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, getting out of turn in line, dress code infractions, and not putting paper in the waste basket. Using the same survey, contemporary teachers rank drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, and assault as the top seven prominent problems. Moreover, contemporary American youth are 32 times more likely to be arrested of a crime than in 1950. American schools in the past several decades have encountered baleful quandaries such as barrage of school shootings, violence against teachers and students, a plethora of illegal drug and alcohol abuse, and teenage pregnancies. A seemingly interminable number of statistics testify to the fact that the American school children are in trouble. Even at the academic level, illiteracy is higher than 40 or 45 years ago (Bennett, 1983; Coleman, 2004; Jeynes, 2002c, 2007; Toch, Gest, & Guttman, 1993; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

Clearly, something has changed among America's youth and in its schools that is unquestionably very disturbing. There are clearly several reasons why these trends have materialized. Beyond question, the United States underwent drastic change during the 1960s and a host of issues contributed to these transformations. Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence that the removal of prayer and moral teaching out of the public schools is likely one reason for the increase in delinquent behavior among America's school age youth. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate this claim that is gaining support among a growing number of social scientists that in order to resolve many of the behavioral problems among juveniles in the country moral education and religious freedom need to be reinstated in the public schools. In examining this problem, we will first address facts associated with juvenile behavioral problems, then we will examine the events leading up to the removal of prayer and moral education in the schools, and finally we will focus on the evidence suggesting that religious commitment and religious schools improve student behavior and achievement (Carlston, 2004; Fowler, 1999; Jeynes, 2007; Matera, 2001; Matusow, 1984; Michaelsen, 1970; Miles, 2004; O'Neill, 1971; Sikorski, 1993).

ADDRESSING THE FACTS

Widespread Deterioration in Social Behavior among American Youth

To be sure, over the last 45 years behavioral trends have emerged among America's youth that are very disconcerting. Virtually every major measure of adolescent delinquent behavior has soared over this period of time. Not only has this behavior surged, but students are assaulting teachers at a disconcerting rate, causing 1,000 teachers a month to either be hospitalized or seek medical attention (Casserly, Herbert, Raymond, Etzoni, & Shanker, 1985; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998; U.S. Department of Justice, 1999).

As disconcerting as the rise is in school violence, there are other trends that have emerged since prayer and moral education were removed out of the schools in 1962 and 1963. First, preadolescents and adolescents have significantly increased their consumption of illegal drugs since the 1960s. From about 1965 to 1980, youth consumption of illegal drugs soared to unprecedented heights. Since then the number of youth taking illegal

drugs has stabilized. Nevertheless, the overall level of illegal drug consumption remains high, particularly compared to its pre-1965 levels (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999).

Second, youth are much more likely to engage in sexually promiscuous behavior than before prayer and moral education were removed from the public schools. Sexually promiscuous behavior was relatively stable during the 1940s and 1950s, but after prayer and moral education were removed from the schools, premarital pregnancy rates multiplied by seven times. Rates of adolescent and preadolescent rape surged by over three times for the first generation (1963–1980) of youth to complete their schoolings without prayer in the schools. The transformation of the adolescent landscape in terms of sexual behavior is evident not only in the changes in frequency of specific behaviors but in the age of the incipiency of sexual behavior. Surveys indicate that over half of single youth and adolescents had their first sexual experience at the age of 10 (Irvine, 2002; Melody & Peterson, 1999; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998; U.S. Department of Justice, 1999).

Third, following the removal of prayer from the public schools in 1962 and 1963, academic achievement in the United States plummeted. Scores on the nation's most prestigious measure of academic outcomes, the Scholastic Achievement Aptitude Test (SAT), plummeted for 17 consecutive years from 1963 to 1980. Concurrently virtually every major standardized assessment of educational outcomes showed similar declines, including the American College Test (ACT), the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), the Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED), and the Stanford Achievement Test (Clearly & McCandless, 1976; U.S. Department of Education, 2001; Wirtz, 1977).

The decline in scholastic outcome measures beginning in 1963 ushered in an era of academic and literary decline unprecedented in American history. SAT scores, which had never undergone as much as even a two consecutive year decline, dropped for 17 consecutive years. During this period, SAT scores ostensibly dropped 90 points from about 1,000 to 910. Of even greater concern, however, is that the College Board concluded in its reports entitled *On Further Examination* that the actual decline was 110 points because via administration of earlier and later versions of the SAT, the Board determined that tests in the 1970s were about 20 points easier than those administered in the 1960s (Armbruster, 1977; Wirtz, 1977).

Although the College Board concluded that demographic changes in the United States contributed significantly to the decline in SAT scores, statistical analysis of the College Board report indicates that about 62 percent of the decline resulted from academic deterioration. The analysis also indicates that on other state and nationwide assessments, demographic factors can only explicate a minute amount of the educational decline. The Stanford Achievement Test, for example, showed declines of about 1 and 1/2 years in mathematical outcomes for middle school students, even when analysis is confined to the 1964–1973 period (Armbruster, 1977; Cooperman, 1985; Jeynes, 2003a).

Other developments during the post-1963 period also point to a real academic decline. For example, many academics point out that rates of illiteracy have risen in the country and now stand at unacceptable levels. The American literacy rate which at its best point stood at 1/2 of 1 percent, the lowest in the world, has now increased by six times and stands at 3 percent. This rate is now one of the highest in the industrialized world and as a result the American literacy rate now only ranks tied for 62nd in the world. In fact, some Third World nations, such as Tonga, Mongolia, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, have higher literacy rates than does the United States. Reading research confirms that the literacy levels of Americans may lag those of past generations. Research comparing the reading levels of contemporary textbooks with those of the 1930s and 1880s indicates that textbooks from this period were at a reading level of least two years higher than most contemporary books (Barton, 2004; Central Intelligence Agency, 2006; Gatto, 2001; Harman, 1987; Kozol, 1985; Sykes, 1995; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

School Shootings

Naturally, the recent barrage of school shootings are the most ostensible sign of the moral deterioration that is apparent among the youth. Nevertheless, it is simply the most pronounced sign of moral decay amidst a cacophony of other indicators that over the years have painted an ominous picture of the moral fabric of this country. Having stated this, one should note that contrary to popular belief, school shootings did not begin in 1996. They only became associated with the suburbs in 1996. Beginning in the 1960s, urban areas would often report school shootings. However,

they did not receive the press coverage that suburban shootings of the late 1990s and early 2000s received. One reason for this is that a myriad of Americans possess a belief that violence is an unfortunate but expected part of the fabric of the urban lifestyle. In contrast, people are flabbergasted and agape when a shooting occurs in the so-called tranquil suburbs. The reality is, however, that the school shootings of the last 40 or 45 years are a sign of the moral deterioration of American society (Brown & Merritt, 2002; Carlston, 2004; Kopka, 1997; Matera, 2001; Scott & Nimmo, 2000; Zoba, 2000).

One of the indications that American society has paid a costly price for the removal of prayer and moral education from the schools is that school shootings have regularly emerged on the American scene. These violent episodes arose in the mid-1960s in urban areas. However, they really did not gain national attention until 1996 when on February 2 these shootings began their penetration of rural and suburban vicinities (Kopka, 1997). On this date Barry Loukaitis, a 14-year-old from Moses Lake, Washington, killed two students and a math teacher (Coleman, 2004). Loukaitis said that he was influenced by two movies (*Natural Born Killers* by Oliver Stone and *The Basketball Diaries*), a video (Pearl Jam's *Jeremy*), and especially by Stephen King's novel, *Rage*. At the time of the killing, Loukaitis quoted the book by stating, "It sure beats algebra, doesn't it?"

In 1996 and 1997 additional shootings continued, with a principal and various students falling victim. Some of the killings were clearly expressions of anti-Christian hatred. On December 1, 1997 Michael Carneal ambushed a prayer gathering before school and killed three and wounded five. In October 1997 the instigator was a boy who was a Satan worshipper who hated his ex-girlfriend as well as Christians. In 1997–1998, school shootings took the lives of parents, ex-girlfriends, and many youth. The events in Jonesboro, Arkansas, Fayetteville, Tennessee, and Springfield, Oregon received some of the most publicity. However, other shootings occurred in El Cajon and Santee, California, Deming, New Mexico, Stamps, Arkansas, Conyers, Georgia, Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, Mount Morris Township, Michigan, and in numerous other locales (Coleman, 2004; Matera, 2001).

In April 1999 the most infamous of the school shootings occurred at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. At this time, Eric Harris and Dylan Kliebold exploded 30 bombs and sprayed the school with 188 shots resulting in the death of 15 students and wounding 14 others.

As dastardly as these outcomes make the plot appear, the plan was to blow up the entire school. Fortunately, two huge 20-pound propane bombs planted in the cafeteria failed to detonate. Scores of handmade pipe bombs also did not explode (Brown & Merritt, 2002; Carlston, 2004; Matera, 2001; Scott & Nimmo, 2000; Zoba, 2000).

Contrary to the assertions of some, Harris and Kliebold were hardly two innocent boys who simply did not like being bullied. Eric Harris stated on his Web site, "My belief is that if I say something, it goes. I am the law, if you don't like it you die. If I don't like you or I don't like what you want me to do, you die" (Brown & Merritt, 2002, p. 84). In addition, Harris warned of the impending attack, "I will rig up explosives all over a town and detonate each of them at will after I mow down the whole [expletive] area" (Scott & Nimmo, 2000, p. 15). Harris wrote in Dylan's handbook, "God I can't wait until they die. I can taste the blood now . . . You know what I hate? MANKIND! Kill everything . . . Kill everything" (Brown & Merritt, 2002, p. 94). Eric Harris was also hurt by a former girlfriend and sought vengeance against her (Brown & Merritt, 2002).

After the Columbine attack, various youth collaborated to plot similar attacks, but by this time the FBI and police had become much more adept at intercepting their communications prior to the assault. On a few occasions, the plots were so prodigious in scope that they dwarfed the Columbine strategy. One episode in 2001 in New Bedford, Massachusetts witnessed law officials intercept an e-mail that revealed the placement of bombs far more lethal than Columbine in an attempt to blow up at least an entire school (Coleman, 2004; Matera, 2001; Newman, 2004).

Just what factors caused the adolescent conspirators to act so maliciously vary from one shooting to the next. A majority of students had a penchant for the music of Marilyn Manson. Most also loved violent video games and many were obsessed with guns. Quite a number recently had their girlfriends break up with them. However, one wonders if far fewer shootings would have occurred if students from these schools, especially the assailants, had been given training in forgiveness, anger management, loving others, showing respect, defending those children who are bullied, and dealing with others tenderly (in breaking up with boyfriends, girlfriends, and so forth). The abundance of shootings raises serious questions about the moral health of America's young (Brown and Merritt, 2002; Coleman, 2004; Matera, 2001).

Concluding Thoughts about the Changes in Youth Behavior

To be sure, several factors contributed to deterioration in adolescent violent and sexual behavior, as well as in their academic prowess. Moreover, several of the factors that contributed to this decline were inextricably connected. For example, the College Board cites an increase in divorce rates and substance abuse as two factors that contributed to declining school outcomes. Moreover, the Board notes a decline in morality and in the work ethic as salient contributing factors. One can certainly make a viable argument that the removal of prayer and moral education influences adolescent moral behavior. Furthermore, one can make an argument that reinstating prayer and moral education in the schools could help student behavior and achievement. However, to make this assertion, most efficaciously one must address the issue of whether there is evidence that moral instruction and allowing religious freedom in the schools can improve student behavior and achievement. In order to do this, one needs to: (1) investigate the research literature regarding the extent to which religious commitment or expression improves student behavior and achievement; and (2) investigate the research literature regarding the extent to which religious schools, which allow prayer and moral education, influence student behavior and achievement. We will now examine the events surrounding the removal of prayer and moral education out of the schools and then address the two issues just mentioned to help determine whether providing moral instruction and allowing religious freedom in the schools can improve student behavior and achievement (Jeynes, 2007; Wirtz, 1977).

THE REMOVAL OF PRAYER AND MORAL EDUCATION FROM THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Prior to 1962, for many generations liberty and religion were inseparable to most Americans. Tocqueville believed the two were closely related and that this was largely what made America strong. He sincerely doubted whether a man could “support complete religious independence and entire political liberty at the same time” (Tocqueville, 1966, p. 409). This belief pervaded not only American public and educators but the legal profession as well. Justice William Douglas asserted in the 1952 Supreme Court decision in *Zorach v. Clauson*, “We are a religious people” and that our “institutions presuppose a Supreme Being” (*Zorach v. Clauson*, 1952).

The Supreme Court Decisions

Nevertheless, in a series of Supreme Court decisions, prayer and Bible reading were removed from the public schools in 1962 and 1963. The first of these Supreme Court decisions was *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), which prohibited corporate school prayer. *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963) disallowed Bible devotional reading. *Murray v. Curlett* (1963) prohibited not only school prayer but also Bible reading. The parent in that case, Madalyn Murray O'Hare, became the most outspoken atheistic leader in the United States. Her son Bill, who was the child directly involved in the case, later greatly regretted his role in the case. He authored a letter of apology to the American people in a Baltimore newspaper, where the family had lived. He later converted to Christianity, became a minister, and dedicated his life to reinstating the freedom to pray in the public schools (Murray, 1982).

The *Engel* case was quite an unusual Supreme Court decision. Michaelsen states, "In a most unusual fashion, Justice Black, in writing the opinion of the Court in *Engel*, did not appeal to a single court case as precedent setting. The opinion consists largely of historical references to such things as actions involving the Book of Common Prayer" (Michaelsen, 1970, p. 199). Justice Douglas went on to repudiate almost every position he had taken accommodating religion in his previous judicial decisions. He mentioned that he opposed the word "God" in the pledge of allegiance and the benefits of the school lunch act being extended to students from private schools. As David Louisell in the *Yale Law Journal* asserted, it seemed that Black was determined to "root out . . . every vestige, direct and indirect, of religion in public affairs" (Louisell, 1964, p. 991).

The prayer in the *Engel* case was used as part of New York State's program of moral education that was entitled "Statement on Moral and Spiritual Training in the Schools" (Kliebard, 1969, p. 198). In the court proceeding itself, the justices acknowledged that no student was compelled to say the prayer. Any child, who so chose, did not have to take part (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962). In fact, Paul Blanshard (1963) observes that the prayer was doubly voluntary. Not only could parents opt out of the prayer, but local school boards could also opt out. The justices also acknowledged that this practice in New York schools was essentially the same as the practice of the U.S. Supreme Court beginning each day, that is, it was asking for God's blessing (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962). Justice Douglas also specifically noted that

this prayer certainly did not establish a religion (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962). In spite of this, the Supreme Court disallowed the prayer.

In *Abington v. Schempp* (1963), the Supreme Court heard a case regarding the reading of the Bible in the classroom. Pennsylvania possessed a law that stated, “At least ten verses from the Holy Bible shall be read, without comment, at the opening of each public school on each school day. Any child shall be excused from such Bible reading, or attending such Bible reading, upon the written request of a parent or guardian” (Pennsylvania Statute). *Murray v. Curlett* (1963) involved a similar situation.

In the *Engel* decision and in the 1963 case of *Abington v. Schempp*, Black and the other Supreme Court justices who sided with him relied on the “separation principle” to argue the case, although the phrase of “separation of church and state” never appears in the Constitution. Justice Stewart disagreed with this interpretation of neutrality. He believed that prohibiting religious expression was showing bias against people of faith and that the only way to maintain neutrality was to allow religious expressions by those who desired them (Kliebard, 1969). Stewart stated that prohibiting religious expression produced not “the realization of state neutrality, but rather . . . the establishment of a religion of secularism” (*Abington v. Schempp*, 1963).

The Public Reaction

Paul Blanshard (1963, p. 21) observes that when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the decision on the New York Regent’s prayer on June 25, 1962, it “was the greatest publicity explosion that ever greeted an American decision about religion.” He continues by stating:

The *New York Times* devoted almost eighteen columns to the prayer story on the day after the decision. The next day there was an editorial and at least three more columns of news and review. Lesser newspapers, with fewer columns available, gave the decision commensurate coverage. For many weeks the public discussion of the decision produced headlines, editorials and a flood of letters to the editor. (Blanshard, 1963, p. 21)

The reaction by the American public and its leadership was not positive. Dwight Eisenhower responded by saying:

I always thought that this nation was essentially a religious one. I realize, of course, that the Declaration of Independence antedates the Constitution, but the fact remains that the Declaration was our certificate of national birth. It specifically asserts that we as individuals possess certain rights as an endowment from our Creator—a religious concept. (*New York Times*, p. 1)

Former President Hoover said the Supreme Court decision constituted “a disintegration of a sacred American heritage.” He added, “The Congress should at once submit an amendment to the Constitution which establishes the right to religious devotion in all government agencies—national, state, or local” (*National Catholic Almanac*, p. 69). On June 26, just one day following the Court's decision, Francis Cardinal Spellman, the foremost leader of the American Catholic Church, “made a blistering attack on the prayer decision” (Blanshard, 1963, p. 51). Bishop Pike also strongly criticized the Court (Blanshard, 1963, p. 57). Of all the strong criticisms launched at the Court by religious leaders such as Spellman, Pike, Billy Graham, and Reinhold Niebuhr, it was Spellman who attacked the Court the most severely. He said:

I am shocked and frightened that the Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional a simple and voluntary declaration of belief in God by public school children. The decision strikes at the very heart of the Godly tradition in which American children have for so long been raised. (*New York Times*, p. 1)

There were many strong opinions voiced by both religious and political leaders in the days immediately following the Supreme Court's Engel decision in June of 1962. Congressman Frank Becker called the Engel decision “the most tragic in the history of the United States” (House Committee on the Judiciary, 1962). In many American religious publications, people voiced their outrage. For example, the *Brooklyn Tablet* called the decision “preposterous” (Sikorski, 1993, p. 418). In the weekly publication *America*, the decision was said to be “asinine,” “stupid,” and “doctrinaire” (Sikorski, 1993, p. 418). John Bennett, dean of Union Theological Seminary, opposed the Engel decision and accurately predicted that in response many Protestant schools would be started (Alley, 1994).

Congressional representatives were firm in their disapproval of the Court's decision. In the *Congressional Record* for the following day, there

was not one individual in Congress who defended the Court's edict (Blanshard, p. 52). An unsuccessful movement was started to impeach the Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren (Blanshard, p. 53). Senator Eugene Talmadge claimed, "the Supreme Court has set up atheism as a new religion" (Hearings before the Committee on the Judiciary, 1962, p. 140).

An August 30, 1963 Gallup Poll indicated that Americans were opposed to the Engel, Murray, and Schempp decisions by a 3-1 margin. Even the newspaper media, often criticized for being left of center politically, was about twice as likely to express opposition to the Engel decision. Many states, especially in the East and South, initially asserted that the injunction did not apply to them. Some of the states taking this position included Delaware, New Jersey, Ohio, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, North Carolina, Iowa, and Oklahoma. Nevertheless, a study indicated that in four eastern states (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maine, and Massachusetts), 96 percent of the schools *did* have Bible reading before 1962 and 97 percent *did not* have Bible reading after 1962 (Sikorski, 1993).

Taken together, the Engel, Schempp, and Murray court decisions eliminated public school prayer, religious released-time taking place on school premises, and school-sponsored group prayer. Although these three court decisions curtailed the expressions of people of faith in the classroom, there were certain activities involving religion that were still allowed. First, there could be religious released-time off school premises. Second, ceremonies that were patriotic or civic in purpose with religious references were also acceptable. Third, the objective study of teaching about religion was also permitted (Michaelsen, 1970).

There have been other cases that have further specified what activities are permissible on school grounds. In *Reed v. Van Hoven* (1965), a Michigan Supreme Court case, the court asserted that saying grace over your lunch at school was allowed only if you did not move your lips. And indeed there had been many children suspended from school for saying grace aloud at school. One recent case involved a six-year-old child who was placed on in-school suspension because he prayed before he ate at school (Barton, 1990; Rock of God, 2002).

A copious number of people objected to the Supreme Court's decisions not merely because of the decisions themselves but also on the basis of the unusual lack of judicial experience that the Supreme Court justices had. In almost every case, the justices were appointed to the

Supreme Court following a long history of political rather than judicial experience.

- Chief Justice Earl Warren had served as Governor of California for 10 years before his appointment;
- Justice Hugo Black had been a U.S. Senator for 10 years;
- Justice William Douglas was chairman of the Security and Exchange Commission;
- Justice Arthur Goldberg served as Secretary of Labor; and
- Justice Felix Frankfurter was an assistant to the Secretary of Labor and served as a founding member of the ACLU.

Ironically, the only justice with extended federal Constitutional experience before he began his service on the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Potter Stewart, was also the only justice to object to the removal of prayer and Bible reading (*McCullum v. Board of Education*, 1948).

The Frequent Erroneous Application of the Decisions

Although the Supreme Court decisions are themselves controversial, the prayer and moral education in school has become even more divisive because of the means by which school officials either properly or improperly apply these decisions. There have been many educational administrators who, acting either out of ignorance or out of more prejudicial motives, have suspended many children for taking their Bibles to school. This problem became sufficiently pervasive so that in late June of 1995 the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives held hearings on this issue. One of the cases that emerged during these hearings was that of April Fiore. Ms. Fiore's daughter, Rebecca, and two of her friends sometimes carried Bibles in the school. The school admonished them to immediately refrain from carrying their Bibles in school, or they would be suspended from school for 10 days (the same punishment as for possession of illegal drugs). The girls maintained that their rights of freedom of religion were being stifled. When they were caught carrying their Bibles on another occasion, school authorities suspended them from school for 10 days and strongly urged the parents to send their children to another school (House Committee on the Judiciary, 1995).

The hearings before the House Committee on the Judiciary created a large degree of consternation. Consequently, shortly after the completion

of the hearings, on July 12, 1995, Bill Clinton was compelled to speak to the issue of religious freedom in the public schools. In a speech at James Madison High School in Vienna, Virginia, Clinton stated, “nothing in the First Amendment converts our public schools to religion-free zones or requires all religious expression to be left at the schoolhouse door.” Although Clinton probably meant well, a voluminous number of reports continue to emerge of students who believe that they have had their rights to religious freedom of speech violated. On May 19, 2000 a teacher at Lynn Lucas Middle School in Texas threw the Bibles of Angela and Amber Harbison in the trash asserting, “This is garbage!” The school justified the action by stating the Bible includes “hate speech.” In 1999, a number of schoolboys were suspended for praying in front of their classmates. Praying in school and Bible reading are probably the most common types of religious expressions that are punished by suspension. A first grader at Haines Elementary School was sent to the principal’s office for reading a Bible passage, even though the teacher had asked the students to read aloud any literature passage of their choice. On April 1, 2002, Palm Desert California school officials declared that a student was forbidden to give a religious gift (a video) to another student (Blessings for Life, 2002; Dominion School, 2002; Libertocracy, 2002; Religious Tolerance, 1995, 2002; Spin-Tech, 1999).

The ostensible religious restrictions have extended to a number of different areas. In 1997, a high school student in Florida was suspended for handing out religious literature, before and after school hours, even though he did not engage in this activity during school hours. Another student was suspended for saying “Jesus Christ is Lord” in the classroom. One student was told not to bring any more Christian material to school or suspension would likely follow. In February 2000 a principal forbade a Bible Club from using the cross as a club symbol. Religious clothing has also been an area of concern. An Alabama school blocked students from wearing crosses (Christianity.com, 2002; Jeremiah Project, 2002; *Maranatha Christian Journal*, 1999; Religious Tolerance, 2002; Spin-Tech, 1999).

Although most Americans do not want teacher-led prayer, Gallup and Harris polls indicate that about 75 percent of Americans do want voluntary prayer in the schools. They do not favor a school environment that is hostile to religion. Most Americans believe that there should be a period of silence given to children, whatever their religious or personal beliefs, during which they can pray or just simply collect their thoughts (Barton, 1990).

The Removal of Prayer's Influence on Moral Education

The Supreme Court's expunging of vocal prayer and Bible reading from the public schools had a dramatic impact on the teaching of moral education in the public schools. Prior to 1962, moral education was founded on the Bible. Once Bible reading was forbidden, schools no longer emphasized moral teachings such as "turning the other cheek," "you should not covet," and "honoring your mother and father" for fear that many would interpret these as religious and moral teachings. A great deal of this change was not a product of the desires of school officials, but their fear of parental lawsuits. Many administrators were convinced that if they persisted in teaching these moral principles, of which a majority had Christian roots, an atheist parent would bring the school officials to court. Indeed, it may well be that the sudden decline in school-sponsored moral instruction had even a greater negative impact on student behavior than the thwarting of religious freedom by banning vocal prayers in the school.

The removal of moral teaching from the public schools quickly became associated with a religious and moral decline in the nation as a whole. It is difficult to determine how much of this decline resulted from the removal of vocal prayer and Bible reading from the school and how much the moral decline influenced the Supreme Court decisions on this matter. The direction of causality is likely in both directions. Nevertheless, the removal of Bible reading and verbal prayer had a dramatic impact on the extent to which teachers dared address moral education (Sikorski, 1993). Paul Vitz (1994) also notes that following 1962 public school textbook manufacturers substantially reduced the number of moral lessons that had previously been a recurring thread in many American textbooks.

IS THERE EVIDENCE THAT MORAL INSTRUCTION AND ALLOWING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE SCHOOLS COULD IMPROVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND ACHIEVEMENT?

Although there is a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that the removal of prayer and moral instruction in the schools had a deleterious effect on human behavior, if one is to strengthen this argument it is vital to demonstrate that religiosity as expressed by both individual students and by schools has an ameliorative effect on student behavior and academic achievement. Two of the primary sets of studies about the possible

effects of reintroducing moral education and religious freedom in the classroom are studies on the influence of religious commitment and religious schools.

Religious Commitment Studies

In reviewing research of religious commitment, it is important to define what is meant by religious commitment or religiosity. For the purposes of this chapter, religious commitment was defined as the extent to which an individual considered himself or herself religious and the consistency with which an individual attended a church, Bible study, youth group meeting, or other place of worship. Although some studies include all kinds of religions in their research, the overwhelming number of religious people that were examined were Christians. Nicholas and Durrheim (1996) undertook research to confirm the concept of religiosity. They examined 1,817 college students and found that religiosity increased “as a function of the fundamentalism of religious beliefs” (p. 89).

The Effects of Religious Commitment on Academic Achievement

The oldest component of the debate on the effects of religion has to do with the American education system. Over the last 35 or 40 years, there has been a considerable amount of debate on the effects of religion on education. The larger portion of this debate has focused on the effects of religious schools on the educational achievement of children. Nevertheless, a growing number of social scientists are studying Christian and religious commitment. For example, Dijkstra and Peschar (1996) examined the influence of religious commitment on the academic achievement of Dutch children. Dembo, Levin, and Siegler (1997) found that Israeli children attending “ultraorthodox” schools performed better in reasoning problems than their counterparts in mainstream schools. Richard Koubek (1984) found that among Christian Evangelical high school students, there was a positive correlation between the extent of a student's religious commitment and academic achievement. Jeynes (1999, 2002a, 2003b) examined the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) and found that not only do religiously committed African American and Hispanic students do better academically than their less religious counterparts, but that when one examines these religious minority students who are in

intact families, the academic gap versus white students disappears (Dembo, Levin, & Siegler, 1997; Gaziel, 1997; Lee & Bryk, 1993).

Recent meta-analyses have statistically combined all of those studies that have been done on the effects of religious commitment on the academic outcomes of children. These meta-analyses found that individual religious commitment has a consistently positive association with strong academic outcomes (Jeynes, 2002a, 2003a, 2004a, 2004b).

There are a number of reasons that social scientists frequently give for the positive relationship between religiosity and school outcomes. The first of these reasons, and historically probably the most acknowledged, deals with a religious work ethic. Although a work ethic is commonly referred to as the "Protestant work ethic," recent research indicates that such a work ethic may extend beyond the Protestant sphere to other religious groups as well. Second, a relationship between religiosity and educational outcomes emerges from the tendency for religious people to abstain from behaviors that are regarded as undisciplined and harmful to academic achievement. A number of studies indicate that religiously committed teens are less likely to become involved in drug and alcohol abuse. Other studies indicate that religiously committed teens are less likely to engage in sexual behavior or become pregnant while they are still teenagers. The third reason emerging from research suggests that religiosity is likely to cause people to have an internal locus of control. Educational psychologists have found a rather consistent relationship between possessing an internal locus of control and performing well in school (Bahr, Hawks, & Wang, 1993; Beck, Cole, & Hammond, 1991; Brownfield & Sorenson, 1991; Jackson & Coursey, 1988; Johnson, 1992; Mentzer, 1988; Miller & Olson, 1988).

Religious Commitment and Juvenile Delinquency

Over the last few decades, researchers have presented a substantial amount of empirical evidence indicating that religiosity has a substantial degree of impact on a wide range of physical, social, and behavioral outcomes. Perhaps the most comprehensive analysis done along these lines was undertaken by Harold Koenig, Michael McCullough, and David Larson in their book, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, published by Oxford University Press. In this thorough review of the literature, the authors examined over 1,000 studies on religiosity's relationship with physical and mental health, substance abuse, and delinquency (Koenig, 1993,

1999; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). Social scientists have initiated other similar reviews as well. Johnson, Le, Larson, & McCullough (2000) specifically addressed the relationship between religiosity and delinquency in a systematic review. In each of these studies, the researchers found that religious commitment was usually associated with positive physical, emotional, and social outcomes. For the purposes of this chapter, we are most concerned with the effects of religious commitment on behavior outcomes, particularly of adolescents.

General Delinquent Behavior

During the 1990s and early 2000s, a growing amount of research addressed the relationship between religiosity and juvenile delinquency. Previous to this time, several studies examined this relationship, but they were not particularly great in number. The earlier studies stirred a debate about whether the influence of religiosity was dependent on it being exercised in a “moral community” as opposed to a secular one. Indeed, whether religiosity has a greater impact in an environment that esteems morality more than in a setting which does not is an intriguing question that is patently related to the school prayer debate, and we will address this issue shortly (Albrecht, Chadwick, & Alcorn, 1977; Burkett & White, 1974; Cochran, 1992, 1993; Hirschi & Stark, 1969; Johnson, Jang, & Li, 2000; Stark, Kent, & Doyle, 1982).

Research from the 1990s and early 2000s has demonstrated a pretty consistent pattern, indicating that religious commitment is associated with lower levels of juvenile delinquency. Even if one focuses on the entire body of research on this topic, about five out of six studies examining the association between religious commitment and juvenile delinquency show an inverse relationship. In a systematic review of the relationship between religiosity and delinquency, Johnson, Li, Larson, and McCullough (2000) found that of the 40 studies included in their analysis only one found that religiosity was associated with higher levels of delinquency. Several ostensible patterns emerge from most of the studies examining religiosity and juvenile delinquency. First, adolescent religious commitment influences both the behaviors and attitudes of youth. Second, the religious commitment of teens appears to reduce both major and minor manifestations of delinquent behavior. Third, adolescents of faith appear to engage in less antisocial and destructive behavior even in secularized and socially deleterious environments. Fourth, there is a considerable degree of evidence

that religious, usually Christian, delinquency prevention programs do positively impact adolescent behavior so that deviance declines. Fifth, there is evidence that suggests that the longer and/or the deeper the experience of religious commitment, the greater the influence of the religious orientation on delinquent behavior (Baier & Wright, 2001; Cochran, 1992, 1993; Evans et al., 1996; Jang & Johnson, 2001; Johnson, Jang, & Li, 2000; Jeynes, 2002c, 2003d; Johnson, Larson, Jang, & Li, 1999, 2000).

To the extent that the above findings are true, one should not be surprised that juvenile crime skyrocketed after the Supreme Court removed the expression of prayer and Bible reading from the public schools. Instead, as President Bill Clinton asserted in 1995, the United States now possesses a public school system that communicates to students that they must leave their faith at the front door of the school. And the public school educators often maintain that Christianity and Judaism, in particular, have little or no value in today's secularized society (Decter, 1995; Olasky, 1988; Religious Tolerance, 1995).

That is a substantial amount of evidence indicating that American public schools at best de-emphasize and frequently omit the contribution of church, synagogues, and faith in American historical and contemporary life. In addition, the presentation of religion by many public school textbooks and educators is often negative. Paul Vitz (1994), a professor at New York University (NYU), undertook a study of textbooks used in American public schools and determined that the overwhelming number of American textbooks leave out substantial sections of religious references that add essential information and context to speeches and events and appeared consistently in earlier versions of the textbooks (Jeynes, 2003a; Vitz, 1994). Vitz (1994) also noted that public school textbooks often make negative references to Christianity much more than positive ones.

When integrating research findings to assess the influence that the removal of prayer and moral education from the public schools may have had on public school students, two questions are especially important to address. First, to what degree does religiosity have a more trenchant impact in a moral community rather than a secular one? Second, to what degree do religious solutions to the presence of juvenile delinquency work better than secular solutions? Addressing these questions is essential if one is to comprehend the impact that the reintroduction of moral education in the public schools is likely to have. To see why this is the case, let us now examine each of these questions.

To What Extent Does Religiosity Have More of a Viable Impact in Moral Communities Rather Than Secular Ones?

There is no question that juvenile crime is at a much higher rate than was the case prior to the decision to remove prayer from the public schools. Although, the removal of prayer and moral education from the schools is clearly not the only factor contributing to this development, the removal of moral education from any institution is likely to have a negative impact. However, the question emerges, if a moment of silence is permitted in the public schools, along with the implementation of moral education, will the positive effects be similar to those yielded before the Supreme Court decisions of 1962 and 1963? According to Stark, Kent, & Doyle (1982), the answer to this question is “no” in many places in the United States, because the nation is less of a moral community than it was before 1963 (Jeynes, 2010, in press; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001).

It is true many will acknowledge that the reintroduction of moral education and the allowance of a moment of silence in the classroom will not reduce juvenile delinquency to pre-1963 levels, because American society is less religious than was the case then. Nevertheless, it may well be the case that reintroducing moral education and allowing a moment of silence will have a greater impact than one imagines. For example, evidence suggests that the influence of religious schooling on student behavior and school outcomes is greater for less religious students than for religious ones. One hypothesis for this result is that because students of faith are more likely to already be grounded in faith and the self-disciplined life that often accompanies this, they receive less additive benefit than people who are not of faith. If this hypothesis is correct, then the behavioral and academic advantage to adding moral education and a moment of silence in the schools is more akin to the advantages derived from less religious people attending Evangelical, Catholic, or other religious private schools than it is for people of faith attending these schools (Jeynes, 2003c; Johnson, Larson, Jang, & Li, 1999, 2000; Sander, 1996; Stark, Kent, & Doyle, 1982).

To What Degree Do Religious Solutions to the Presence of Juvenile Delinquency Work Better than Secular Solutions?

This question is important to address for two reasons. First, there are secularists who would espouse a moral education component to the

curriculum but would like to avoid what they consider Christianity-based components such as treating others as you would want to be treated and the central nature of forgiveness. Some people would also like to exclude the idea of a moment of silence. Second, some contend that although restoring public schools will succor the development of more pro-social behavior among adolescents, it will not have the influence of faith-based initiatives because the religious component is vital to maximize the pervasive nature of its impact (Barton, 1990, 2004; Meier, 2002; Sandin, 1992).

There is evidence that faith-based programs such as Teen Challenge, the Salvation Army, and Catholic Charities are generally more efficacious in treating manifestations of juvenile delinquency than their non-faith-based counterparts. Although the findings favoring faith-based initiatives are consistent, one should keep in mind that they are also limited in number. Therefore, social scientists need to know more about how widespread the faith-based initiative advantage is versus their non-faith-based counterparts (Bicknese, 1999; Florida Department of Corrections, 2000; Johnson, 2002; O'Conner, 2001; Young et al., 1995).

Nevertheless, to the extent that faith-based initiatives are more effective than secular ones, this suggests that totally decoupling moral education from any semblance of religious principle would be unwise. This is especially true because the Christian concept of treating others as one would like to be treated is probably a prerequisite for common decency to prevail in society. Furthermore, certain Judeo-Christian principles have become so interwoven in society that these ideas are inextricably connected with American culture. Consequently, to fail to teach such notions would be to refuse to teach American culture in the classroom. Second, it seems plausible that religious-based morality will have the greatest impact if the religious beliefs that form the basis of that morality are allowed to remain. With this in mind, one can argue that the positive effects of attending a Catholic, Evangelical, or other religious school will outweigh the benefits of attending a public school, even with the addition of moral education (Barton, 1990, 2004; Meier, 2002; Nord, 1995).

The Effects of Religious Commitment on the Use of Illegal Drugs and Alcohol

Cochran (1992, 1993), Cochran, Beeghley, and Bock (1992), and Jeynes (2006) determined that adolescent religious commitment was associated

with lower drug and alcohol use. Cochran asserts, however, that religiosity leads to a reduced incidence of drug use more than a reduced incidence of alcohol use. Cochran did, however, find a relationship between the religious commitment of secondary school students and decreased alcohol use, particularly among evangelical Christians. Research also indicates that religious commitment may help some people deal with their stress. A large degree of and/or the frequent consumption of alcohol is sometimes, although certainly not always, associated with a high level of stress. To the extent that people seek to become “high” on drugs or alcohol to relieve stress, religious commitment might be a meaningful alternative (Curtin, Lang, Patrick, & Stritzke, 1998; McFarlane, 1998).

Social scientists may have established some sense of causality in terms of religious commitment affecting attitudes and behaviors toward drugs. One question that has emerged, as a result of particular studies, is whether the religious commitment of individuals affects their use of certain drugs more than others. Free (1994) found that religious commitment affects the use of less serious drugs more than it does the use of more serious drugs. Corwyn, Benda, and Ballard (1997) found that the religious commitment of individuals affected their use of some drugs, but not others. Why does religiosity affect the use of less serious illegal drugs, such as marijuana, more than it does the use of more serious illegal drugs, such as cocaine? Possibly there exist more societal forces that reduce the consumption of more serious drugs like cocaine. To the extent that religious commitment is one of the societal forces that discourages the use of all drugs, one would think that religious commitment would have a greater impact on lowering the usage of a particular drug, in cases where there are fewer other societal forces working to reduce drug usage (Francis, 1997).

Premarital Sex

There is also evidence that religious commitment is associated with a decreased incidence in premarital intercourse. For example, Sharon Lock and Murray Vincent (1995) found that among 564 predominantly black adolescent girls, religious commitment played a strong role in predicting low levels of premarital sex. Velma Murry-McBride (1996) addressed this same issue, focusing on 109 middle-income African American females and found similar results. Some researchers have attempted to examine the effects of religiosity on both attitudes and behaviors regarding

premarital intercourse. Brent Miller and Terrence Olson (1988) examined 2,423 adolescents and found that there was not only a strong relationship between attitudes and behaviors about premarital sex but that religious commitment predicted both. Jeynes (2003d) found the same relationship using the NELS data set. Peterson and Donnerwerth (1997) obtained data from the cumulative social surveys and found that conservative Protestants maintained the most consistent beliefs over time about premarital sex being morally wrong. Scott Beck (1991) and his colleagues examined the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and concluded that Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians were the least likely to engage in premarital sex (Bryan & Freed, 1993; Sheeran, Abrams, Abraham, & Spears, 1993).

Part of the research literature addresses very specific issues regarding the relationship between religious commitment and premarital intercourse. Social scientists have examined the effects of religiosity on sexual satisfaction, the use of contraceptives, and the relationship between religiosity and biological factors. The effects of religious commitment on the tendency for adolescents to have less permissive attitudes and behaviors regarding premarital intercourse and premarital childbirth has been the subject of international research as well (Davidson, Darling, & Norton, 1995; Halpern et al., 1994).

Limitations of Studies on Religious Commitment

Although the research literature is clear that religiosity reduces the propensity for delinquent behavior, what is not evident is what components of religious commitment have the greatest impact. Johnson, Li, Larson, & McCullough (2000) identified six components of religious commitment: attendance at a church or other place of worship, salience (i.e., the degree to which a person regards religious commitment as an integral part of one's life), denominational affiliation, the extent to which one prays, whether one attends a Bible study, and the extent to which one participates in other religious activities. Johnson, Li, Larson, and McCullough found that 50 percent of the studies they examined used only one or two of these six components. Generally, social scientists chose to use salience of religiosity or attendance at a church or other place of worship or both of these variables. Johnson and his colleagues aver that the research community would know more about the specific nature of religious commitment if more social scientists would examine the influence of these other variables.

How many components of religiosity are included in a study apparently has a considerable impact on the findings that emerge in a study. Johnson and his colleagues (2000) found that for the 38 percent (15 of 40) of the studies that included four or more religious commitment variables, 100 percent of them found that religious commitment reduces delinquency. This finding, in conjunction with other results already mentioned, suggests the following. First, various components of religious commitment collectively apparently have a greater impact on delinquency than one or two aspects of religious commitment examined separately. Second, different components of religious commitment likely have a differing effect on various individuals. For some people, just examining the influence of attendance and salience is sufficient to yield a statistically significant effect for religious commitment. For other people, however, only the combination of a few components of religiosity will yield statistically significant effects.

It is apparent that including several components of religious commitment is preferable for at least two reasons. First, incorporating several measures of religious commitment will give a more complete perspective on the influence of religiosity. Second, including more measures will also give one a sense of what aspects of religious commitment have a greater impact than others. For example, does one's prayer life have a greater influence on delinquent behavior than attending church or another type of worship service?

Religious School Studies

In addition to the primacy of studies on the influence of religious commitment on student behavioral and academic outcomes, if one is to argue that moral education and the practice of religious freedom will enhance student's lives, studies examining the influence of religious schools are also instructive. Most of the research on the effect of religious schools, primarily Christian (Evangelical and Catholic), has focused on academic achievement more than it has on school behavior. The vast majority of studies examining the impact of attending religious schools on student achievement indicate that students attending religious schools outperform their counterparts in public schools. Researchers differ about the reasons why students from religious schools may outperform students from public schools. Gaziel (1997) claims that the achievement gap can specifically be

attributed to differences in school culture. Some social scientists argue that to the extent to which this is true, religious schools do a better job of helping disadvantaged students. An alternative or supplemental view, given by some, is that religious schools promote parental involvement more than public schools do (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Coleman, 1988; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Gaziel, 1997; Jeynes, 2002b; Marsch, 1991; Morris, 1994; Riley, 1996).

There are some educators who doubt the extent to which this advantage is due to certain positive qualities in the way the schools are run. Some researchers believe that students from religious schools outperform public school students because public schools have a high percentage of low-socioeconomic-status (SES) and racial minority children. They assert that religious schools have an advantage in that they are able to choose which students they want to attend their schools and this fact causes the average private school family to have a higher level of SES. Moynihan (1989), however, propounds evidence that suggests that the racial distribution of students in religious schools is similar to that found in public schools. In addition, some research suggests that religious schools may especially benefit students of color. In addition, in research that examines family income, parents sending their children to public school made, on average, only about 18 percent less than parents sending their children to Catholic school. These researchers also point out that the religious school advantage is not due to increased expenditures per student because religious schools spend about two-thirds of what public schools do on a per student basis (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1992; Baker, 1998, 1999; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995; Hall, 1986; Hardy & Vieler-Porter, 1995; Lee, 1987; Murphy, 1990; Neal, 1997).

Religious Schools and Student Achievement

Jeynes conducted meta-analyses that indicate that even when studies controlled for SES, children who attended Evangelical and Catholic schools academically outperformed their counterparts who attended public schools. Moreover, over time an increasing number of public school educators are acknowledging that they have a great deal to learn from the private school. For example, the Chicago public school system is